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# ATHER BOOKS & PORTRAITS

THROUGH SIX EARLY AMERICAN GENERATIONS

1630 - 1831

with Biographical Sketches by  
FRANKLIN P. COLE



CASCO PRINTING COMPANY  
Portland, Maine 04112

His earlier books include:

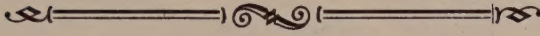
- They Preached Liberty*, 1941; new edition 1977  
*The Willow and the Bridge* (with Toyohiko Kagawa) 1947  
*Diary of a Tour Leader's Travails*, 1959  
*Prayers*, 1969 and 1970 printings.  
*Sursum Corda*, 1971  
*Prayers II*, 1973  
*Living by Faith*, 1974  
*The Bible and How It Grew*, 1975 and 1976 printings.

- ¶ The dating of this volume on its title-page, 1630-1831, extends from the year John Cotton preached his farewell sermon to the Winthrop Fleet until, six generations later, Mather Brown died in London.
- ¶ Cotton Mather in 1684 was the first writer on record to use the term "American" to describe a European colonist rather than a native Indian.
- ¶ Ornamental capitals, head-and-tail pieces used in this volume appeared in the original Mather books of the late 17th and early 18th centuries.



TO ELEANOR,

*who, with conjugal compassion,  
extended helping hand and spirit  
throughout "the Mather bog."*

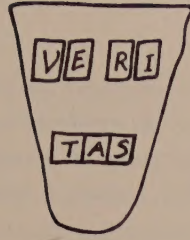






FRENCH EMBLEMATIC PORTRAIT: "At last Diogenes has found a *Man!*"

Benjamin Franklin was a living link among five Mather generations. As a Boston lad, he heard the patriarchal Dr. Increase preach in the Old North Church. He visited Cotton, whose *Essays to Do Good* influenced his thought and writings. During the Revolutionary era, he regularly corresponded with Samuel Mather and Mather Byles, grandsons of Increase. Finally, while ambassador in Paris, Franklin received the young artist, Mather Brown, and armed him with a letter of introduction to Benjamin West in London.



**W**HEN the Puritans wrote *Veritas* on the open books, they had in mind two paths by which truth could be obtained: one, revelation as interpreted by human reason; the other, the advancement of knowledge and learning.

— President James B. Conant, *Harvard University  
Tercentenary Oration*, 16 September, 1936

**I**MUST study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy . . . in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.

— John Adams in a letter to his wife. Paris, 1780.

**A**LITTLE rebellion now and then is a good thing; the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.

— Thomas Jefferson, in a letter from Paris, 1787



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**A**NYONE who studies the manuscripts and printed works of 17th and 18th century authors, like the Mathers, is certain to have high admiration and appreciation for their labors. Writing with quill pens in flickering illumination; risking an only manuscript to a printer, more often in London than a colonial American town; seldom if ever receiving a royalty for their books, and frequently having them pirated by printers and booksellers: these pioneering American writers are owed a debt of gratitude by modern readers which no formal acknowledgment can repay.

Hearty praise is also due those who collected and preserved the first books printed in English America. Four generations of Mathers were avid bibliophiles, although probably the most notable collector of early Americana was the Rev. Thomas Prince. He had the foresight to preserve and store several copies of *The Bay Psalm Book* (1640) in the belfry of the Old South Church, Boston. They are now the majority of extant copies of the first book printed in the present U.S.A. Historical society libraries and the rare book departments of a few college and public libraries are now the repository of most of the Mather and other early colonial collections.

I deeply appreciate the generous use of Mather manuscripts and publications, as well as the professional assistance of librarians in the following institutions:

The American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. The late Clifford K. Shipton, director and librarian, and archivist of Harvard University, charted my early research, read the first draft of my manuscript, and gave comments of wisdom, warning, and encouragement. The Society has the largest collection of Mather portraits of the six generations, and I am most grateful for permission to reproduce them in this volume.

The Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, which has one of the largest collections of Mather manuscripts, books, and prints. They, as well as several later publications of the Society, have been helpful to me.

The McGregor Library of the University of Virginia, which houses the incomparable collection of the late William Gwynn Mather. The curator, Mr. William Runge, has kindly assisted my efforts in correspondence and personal interview.

The Boston Athenaeum, where as one of many proprietors, I wrote much of the original draft. In an adjoining fifth-floor cubicle, Dr. Ola Elizabeth Winslow was at work on her *Master Roger Williams*. She patiently read my manuscript, and made several needed corrections, including spelling!

The Congregational Library, Boston, where the librarian and curator of rare books, the Rev. John A. Harrer, gave me access to "the cages", and freely shared his knowledge of and enthusiasm for the Mathers.

The Houghton Library of Harvard University, which prominently displays a large collection of books by Cotton Mather, as if in belated recognition of his talents.

The New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, which owns two "Letter-Books" of the Mather Byles family, including handwritten letters by and to members of three generations. Several are quoted in this work.

Two librarians who have most often assisted my research – and with unusual patience and kindness – are Miss Mary Brown of the American Antiquarian Society and Miss Winnifred Collins of the Massachusetts Historical Society. My encomiums to both!

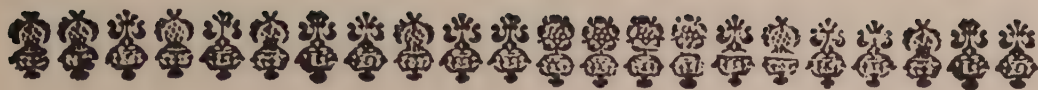
Apart from the original Mather publications, the books which I have used most frequently are the masterful, definitive bibliographies of Thomas J. Holmes. Under the aegis of William Gwynn Mather, he compiled a two-volume bibliography of Increase Mather's works, three volumes of Cotton Mather's, and a single volume of *The Minor Mathers* – including Richard, who was no minor, except in quantity of production! Several of the title-pages which Holmes reproduced, (and more cleanly legible than the originals,) have been included in this volume.

It was Thomas J. Holmes, after years of labor on his bibliographies, who spoke of "the Mather bog" from which he had been delivered. As indicated in my dedicatory inscription, I am most thankful to my beloved wife, Eleanor, for her patience, encouragement, constructive criticism, and sustaining love while together we explored an area of the colonial American landscape, which yielded both exhilaration and frustration, summit and bog.

Franklin P. Cole

Portland, Maine  
September, 1978





## THE MATHER PORTRAITS

**RICHARD MATHER:** There are at least two oil portraits of him, which appear contemporaneous. They are unsigned, and the artist (or artists) remain unknown. The oft-reproduced woodblock engraving, the earliest known portrait engraving to have been made in America, was carved about the time of Mather's death in 1669. The artist was John Foster (1648-1681) who was probably a portrait painter as well as engraver. He graduated from Harvard in 1667, taught school in Dorchester, and in 1675 became Boston's pioneer printer.

**INCREASE MATHER:** His full-length portrait in the Massachusetts Historical Society is signed and dated "Jan Van Der Spriett, 1688." It was painted in London while Increase, aged 49, was on his Charter mission. Little is known of Van Der Spriett's life and work, except that he was a native of Delft, Holland, and spent most of his working years as a portrait painter and engraver in England. A painting of Increase Mather, with a similar pose, hangs in the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester. Possibly it is a replica by the same artist, but its catalogue listing is "artist unknown."

**COTTON MATHER:** He sat to Peter Pelham shortly before 1728, the year of his death. This faded portrait is in the Mather collection of the American Antiquarian Society. Peter Pelham was born in London in 1697, and apprenticed to John Simon, a leading engraver in mezzotint, in 1713. In 1727, Pelham migrated to Boston, where he made his debut as America's first mezzotintist with his renowned engraving of Cotton Mather. Peter Pelham's son, Henry, became an artist of minor reputation, while his step-son, John Singleton Copley, outshone both the Pelhams in talent and accomplishment.

**SAMUEL MATHER:** Cotton's son was painted by John Greenwood about 1752 in Boston. Greenwood, also a Boston native, was apprenticed to the engraver, Thomas Johnston, but about 1745 he turned to painting portraits. Afflicted with wanderlust, he sailed from Boston at the age of 25, went first to Surinam where he painted more than a hundred portraits; later to



Holland where he specialized in engravings. He finally settled in London in 1762, where he dealt in art and curios and painted a few landscapes.

MATHER BYLES, SR.: As a youth he sat to Peter Pelham. In old age his portrait was painted by Copley. Both men were Loyalist in their sympathies. Incidentally, it was the tea of Copley's father-in-law, Richard Clarke, which was dumped overboard during the Boston Tea Party.

MATHER BYLES, JR. His portrait was painted by his nephew, Mather Brown, in London, in or about 1768. It also hangs in the American Antiquarian Society collection.

MATHER BROWN: A sixth-generation descendant of Richard Mather, he spent most of his adult years in London as a painter of portraits and historical scenes. His life and work are discussed in the final chapter of this volume.



# INTRODUCTION



HIS STUDY of the inter-marrying Cottons and Mathers has taken several turnings of interest and development. It began a score of years ago during a sabbatical at the Harvard Divinity School. Knowing pathetically little about Cotton Mather except his eccentric name and reputed association with Salem witchcraft, I began reading from his extensive works. It was not long before his brilliant talents and diverse interests – almost *da Vincian* in their scope – became apparent. I soon realized, however, that he could not be understood apart from the personalities and achievements of his grandfathers, John Cotton and Richard Mather, and his father, Increase Mather, all of whom he held in reverential esteem. Hence, came the first draft of a manuscript: “The Cotton-Mather Epic through Three Generations.”

The story still did not seem complete. Each leader in his respective generation was concerned, not only for the education of his own children, but for the establishment of schools for all children. In the first generation, John Cotton and Richard Mather were leaders in the establishment of Harvard College, and served on its Board of Overseers until their deaths.

Son-in-law of John Cotton and son of Richard, Increase Mather headed the College, first as Rector and later as President, from 1685 to 1701. Cotton Mather graduated from Harvard at the age of sixteen, and a year later, (1680) received his Master’s diploma from his father’s hand. In turn, he imbued his son, Samuel, and his “fatherless nephew,” Mather Byles, with his zest for learning, supervising their training through Harvard and their preparation for the Christian ministry.

Reverence for the biblical Word of God and respect for truth and wisdom in general continued to inspire five generations of the ministerial Mathers. Their love of liberty and spirit of independence continued throughout the colonial American era, although, as we shall later see, the expression of those sentiments took divergent courses in the pastorates of the cousins, Samuel Mather and Mather Byles, during the American Revolution. The storms of controversy weathered by their ancestors seemed mild compared with the whirlwind they reaped during the 1770s.

The literary output of the Mather family was prolific, particularly during the first three generations. Their publications number more than seven hundred, of which the majority were written by Cotton Mather. Their books include diaries, sermons, verses, biographies, histories, and natural science, on a catholicity of subjects ranging from theology and

churchmanship to witchcraft, earthquakes, health and healing. Some of their books are now the rarest of the rare – like *The Bay Psalm Book*, *The Cambridge Platform*, and the first edition of the *Magnalia*. A Boston bookshop recently offered a tattered, unbound sermon by Cotton Mather for fifteen hundred dollars! Obviously, there can be but few collectors of Matheriana today.

This study of their lives and works has now taken the form of brief biographical sketches, interspersed with reproductions of title-pages of their major works. The principal editorial problem of this project has been selection, which necessitates preference and judgment. (An editor of a metropolitan newspaper, accused of slanting the news, justified himself by saying: “I never consciously *slant* the news; all I do is *select* it.”)

In making selections from the Mather works, I have tried to appraise their contemporary interest and importance. Some of the theological battles in which they engaged, such as the “Half-Way Covenant” and the “Antinomian Controversy”, were lively topics to them although of little concern to us. But their interest in church unity, political freedom and responsibility, educational opportunity, scientific observations, and health for body and spirit – all are timeless human concerns. Most of the selections in this book have been chosen to illustrate these Mather interests.

The portraits have presented no problem of selection, except among those of the sixth-generation artist, Mather Brown. He was almost as prolific in painting historical scenes and portraits of English royalty and American notables as his ancestors were in writing books. His Mather forebears were, however, willing subjects for portrait-sittings. Few if any colonial American families through six generations have an unbroken line of portraits. The earliest was a wood portrait engraving of Richard Mather, produced shortly before his death in 1669, the first portrait engraving known to have been made in the colonies. During the following century and more, the likenesses of many of his descendants would be engraved on metal or painted on canvass.

One of Cotton Mather’s contemporaries, Jonathan Richardson, wrote in his *Essay on the Theory of Painting*, (London, 1715:) “Painting gives us not only the persons, but the characters of great men. The air of the head and the mein in general give strong indications of the mind, and illustrate what the historian says more expressly and particularly.” The truth of this observation, I think, is borne out in the portraits of all the Mathers, from Richard of “rigid matter” to Mather Brown of light-hearted, bohemian ways.

The distinguishing trait which persisted through the six generations was not facial resemblance nor similarity of life-style; it was a devotion to *truth* as each man understood it. No one of them shaded or compromised truth in



order to gain popularity, advancement, or fortune. All of them, to one degree or another, suffered personal hardship in defense of *Veritas*.

John Cotton and Richard Mather emigrated from homeland security and comfort to a pioneer wilderness because they could not conscientiously “conform to the ceremonials.” In the next generation, Increase Mather thundered his “jeremiads,” and took many unpopular stands on moral, political, and educational issues. Generally, however, his stands were for “the hard right against the easy wrong.”

Cotton Mather was the most controversial and slandered member of the family, primarily because of his involvement in what then were regarded as the two most pernicious diseases – witchcraft and smallpox. He sought to cure them both. For his efforts to introduce smallpox inoculation in Boston, he received a bomb through his bedroom window. Although physically endangered, he pursued his course, which by saving many lives was proven to be the true one.

The next generation, represented by the cousins, Samuel Mather and Mather Byles, was caught in fratricidal strife during the Revolutionary years. Samuel was a Patriot preacher, who saw his ancestral church, (the original “Old North,”) reduced to firewood during the British occupation of Boston. Mather Byles was a Loyalist preacher who “preferred one tyrant three thousand miles away to three thousand tyrants within the mile.” He paid dearly for his wit and Loyalist sympathies throughout the latter years of the Revolution. But even when risking life and reputation, neither of the cousins deviated from the political convictions they held prior to 1775.

Mather Brown, the sixth generation artist, expressed his devotion to truth by producing “good likenesses” of his subjects. This talent endeared him to the John Adams family – husband, wife, and daughter – who had their portraits painted by him in London during 1785. “Good likenesses” to Mather Brown were the equivalent of “plain style sermons” to his ancestors, John Cotton and Richard Mather. Both had renounced flowery, classical rhetoric, which they were capable of using, in favor of Anglo-Saxon simplicity that was generally understood. Whether using pen or brush, pulpit or canvass, the Mathers (to paraphrase Kipling) “painted the thing as they saw it, for the God of things as they are.”

We could attempt to fit the six generations into other molds, such as those inscribed: “Learning is a privilege” and “Liberty is a right.” But their sentiments, particularly on liberty, changed with the passing generations, so that no one mold can accommodate them all.

The representatives of the Cotton-Mather family succession herein reviewed were dominant individualists devoted to the commonweal. They

project a recognizable family image, but even more strongly, a vivid and colorful series of personal images. Each can be seen and heard across the brief span of American history. All of them have something vital to tell us, not only about where they embarked and landed, but more relevantly about the course along which we could profitably be sailing.



*God mercifully in the Lord  
J Cotton*

*Richard Mather*

*John Mather*

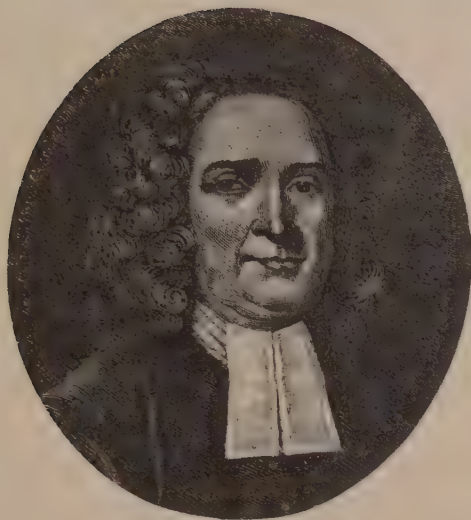
*Cotton Mather*

*Mather Byles*

*Samuel Mather*

# JOHN COTTON

(1584-1652)



ARMS OF COTTON



IN HIS own lifetime John Cotton was hailed as “the New England Patriarch,” and three centuries later was given the same encomium in Cirker’s *Dictionary of American Portraits*. He was the most distinguished Puritan divine of his generation to settle in America, although we are at a loss to understand his towering reputation and magnetic influence through the reading of his sermons, generally pronounced dull. Like the biblical patriarchs, he apparently exercised much of his leadership in personal contacts and tribal councils of which no records exist.<sup>1</sup>

John Cotton was not a Mather, but as a friend and churchman he was closely associated with Richard Mather when the foundations of the Puritan church and commonwealth were being laid in New England. A year after Cotton died in 1652, Mather married his widow, Sarah Story. In the next generation, Increase Mather came home from study in England and discovered that his step-sister, Maria Cotton, was “a gentlewoman with much goodness in her temper.” After a brief courtship, they were married on 6 March 1662. Their eldest son, Cotton Mather, inherited characteristics from both grandfathers: their work ethic, their piety, their devotion to learning – but not their plainness of speech in pulpit and press. He did, however, excel them both – and all others in colonial America – in the production of printed works.



John Cotton had a far more eminent career in England than Richard Mather. Cotton, twelve years the elder, was born in Derby in December, 1584. His father, Roland, was a successful barrister during the golden years of Elizabeth's reign. Following a brilliant record as an undergraduate, John Cotton was appointed lecturer and dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as Richard Mather matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford. During the late 1620s, when the Great Migration was being planned by the Massachusetts Bay Company, Cotton was the pastor of several of its leaders in St. Botolph's Church, Boston, Lincolnshire.

He was invited to deliver the farewell sermon to the passengers of the four ships of the Winthrop Fleet, which sailed from Southampton in April, 1630. No intimate, human interest details were recorded to compare with the Pilgrims' farewell at Delftshaven ten years earlier, where, as William Bradford noted: "They went aboarde, and their friends with them . . . What tears did gush from every eye, & pithy speeches peirst each harte."<sup>2</sup>

Cotton's sermon, from which details of setting and personal remarks are absent, was printed under the title, "God's Promise to His Plantation." (London, 1630.) Early in the sermon he stressed the divine authority and purpose. "This placing of people in this or that Countrey is from God's sovereignty over all the earth, and the inhabitants thereof . . . Wee may not rush into any place, and never say to God, By your leave; but we must discern how God appoints us to this place." Then he raised the question that had soul-searched many of the emigrants, especially those who had left comfortable homes for a risky, thousand-league voyage to an unknown continent: "But how shall I know whether God hath appointed me to such a place; if I be well where I am, what may warrant my removall?"

He then outlined five reasons why people migrate from their native land: to gain knowledge through exploration; "for merchandize and gainsake;" to plant a new colony "as bees doe so when the hive is too full;" and for using their talents better elsewhere. He saved the best Puritan reason until last: "for the liberty of the Ordinances" – that is, freedom of the pulpit from censorship, and freedom to administer baptism and Holy Communion without hierarchial dictation. "When God wrappes us in his Ordinances, and warms us with the life and power of them as with wings, *there* is a land of promise."

Toward the end of the sermon, Cotton gave several admonitions, timely for the occasion. "Be not unmindful of our Jerusalem at home . . . Even ducklings hatched under an henne, though they take to the water, yet will have recourse to the wing that hatched them: how much more should chickens of the same feather and yolke?"

To the Land of Promise they should “goe forth, every man that goeth, with a publick spirit.” Upon arrival, they should have two major concerns. First, “look well to the plants that spring from you, that is to your children, that they do not degenerate as the Israelites did . . .” Second, “offend not the poor Natives, but as you partake of their land, so make them the partakers of your precious faith: as you reap their temporalls, so feed them with your spiritualls.”

Delayed by unfavorable winds at Cowes, the *Arbella*, *Talbot*, *Ambrose*, and *Jewel* finally sailed forth on their seventy-six day voyage on April 6, 1630. The ships were well laden with household furniture, livestock, and provisions of food and drink, which included 8000 pounds of beef, 2800 pounds of pork, 40 bushels of dried peas, and 10,000 gallons of beer.<sup>3</sup> (The last-named provision has been termed “therapeutically sound judgment,” for the beer continued good and mildly anti-scorbic after the water aboard had lost its freshness.) But by all odds, the most precious possession aboard the *Arbella* was the colonial charter granted by Charles I, and guarded by Winthrop as the veritable *Magna Charta* of the Bay Colony’s legal status, rights and liberties. It was the only one of the American colonial charters to leave London. As the spirit of independency grew in Massachusetts, even during its first half-century, there were regrets in Whitehall that this exception had been made!



WINTHROP'S FLEET from oil painting by William F. Halsall



Returning from Southampton to his St. Botolph's parish in Boston, Lincolnshire, John Cotton probably entertained some long, long thoughts. Should he begin preparation to follow some of his most influential and beloved parishioners, (including Richard Saltonsall, Robert Abell, the Lady Arbella and her husband, Isaac Johnson,) whom he had commended to the Land of Promise? Or should he stand his ground in defense of Puritan reformation in England, where already several of his fellow-ministers had been relieved of their parishes by their bishops? His decision had to be delayed, for shortly after his arrival home, both he and his wife, Elizabeth, were stricken with malaria. They were given hospitality and care in the manorhouse of the Earl of Lincoln, Theophilus Clinton, the leading Puritan aristocrat of the area. After several months of the feverish illness, Elizabeth died, leaving the slowly recuperating John Cotton a childless widower at the age of forty-six.

He returned to his heavy duties in St. Botolph's Church, not only weakened by illness and sorrow, but challenged anew to defend his conformity to Church of England ceremonies. During the previous fifteen years, in the whimsical phrase of his biographer, Samuel Whiting, "it pleased God that he could not digest the ceremonies." Cotton, however, was tactful and non-aggressive in simplifying the liturgy only slightly in accord with Puritan belief. There was enough deviation that he was brought before a court in Lincoln and found guilty of non-conformity. In an appeal to a higher court, he was represented by a parishioner, Thomas Leverett, who later migrated to the Bay Colony with him. Leverett convinced the court that Cotton was "a conformable man," and the charges against him were dropped.

Nevertheless, he continued to skate on thin ecclesiastical ice. The Bishop of Lincoln, John Williams, with whom he had long been on friendly terms, inquired about the exact nature and degree of his conformity. In a diplomatic reply, Cotton acknowledged that "your Lordship hath dealt honorably and tactfully with me", and then came to the point at issue. "The truth is, the ceremonies of the Ring in marriage, and standing at the Creed, are usually performed by myself; and all other ceremonies of surplices, cross in Baptism, kneeling at the Communion, are frequently used by my fellow-minister in our church, and that without disturbance of the people." Apparently the bishop accepted the explanation without further ado, and permitted the Boston vicar to continue on his course. Other non-conformist ministers, who were being expelled from their pulpits, could only marvel at Cotton's relative freedom and good fortune. One of them was Samuel Ward of Ipswich, who remarked after being expelled from his pulpit: "Of all the men in the world I envy Mr. Cotton most; for he doth nothing in the way of



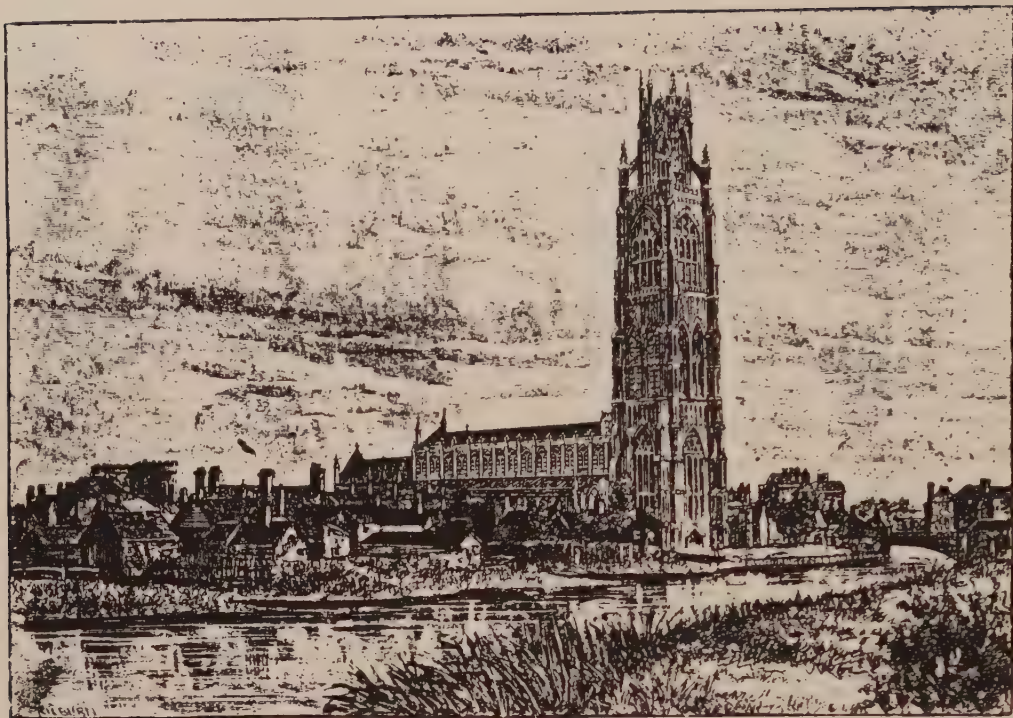
conformity, and yet has his liberty, and I do everything that way, and cannot enjoy mine.”

The year 1632 proved to be decisive in John Cotton’s career. He was being kept under ever closer scrutiny by the ecclesiastical authorities. King Charles I, convinced of the divine right of kings to rule absolutely, had dissolved Parliament in 1629, never to recall it during the next eleven years of his reign. He gave William Laud, (appointed Bishop of London in 1628 and elevated to the Archbishopric of Canterbury in 1633,) the inquisitorial power to stamp out Puritanism and to institute Roman Catholic ceremonies in the Church of England. Laud pursued his assignment with a vengeance. Scores of parish priests were deprived of their living after being haled before the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission. Intellectual leaders, including Richard Sibbes, Paul Baynes, and William Bradshaw were deprived of their university professorships. Some of the persecuted Puritans fled to Holland, others to America, and still others remained in England to weather the storm as best they could.

In such a climate, Cotton displayed faith in the future by marrying Sarah Hawkrige Story, a widow in his parish, during April, 1632. Shortly thereafter he learned that *Letters missive* had been issued against him by the High Commission Court. If he waited for them to be served, he would have to defend himself personally against whatever charges Laud’s inquisition made against him. Still the question haunted him: should he flee or stand his ground? His answer came while reading Cyprian, a third century martyr-bishop of Carthage. The answer, (as paraphrased in the *Magnalia*,) was that “a seasonable flight is, in effect, a confession of our faith, for it is a profession that our faith is dearer unto us than all the enjoyments from which we fly.”

Before constables of the High Court arrived at the vicarage in Boston, Cotton “under a changed name and garb” was on his way to London. While there for several months, he received hospitality and protection in the well-established Puritan underground, particularly in the homes of the Rev. John Davenport and the Earl of Dorset.

Two of Cotton’s letters during his London sojourn have been preserved.<sup>4</sup> One was addressed to his wife, still in Boston. He wrote that it was not yet safe for her to come to London, “for if you come this way, I fear you will be watched and dogged at the heels. But I hope shortly God will make way for thy safe coming.” The second letter was written to his bishop in Lincoln, John Williams. In reviewing his twenty-year ministry in Boston, Cotton said that he sought “to make and to keep a three-fold concord amongst the people: between God and their conscience; between true-



ST. BOTOLPH'S CHURCH, Boston, Lincolnshire.

John Cotton was vicar for twenty-one years in one of the largest parish churches of England. The tower of this church was begun in midsummer, 1309, and was built to a height of 280 feet. In the summit of the tower a power-lantern was placed to guide seamen as far as forty miles distant. The nave, having fourteen groined arches and fifty-two windows, was designed to be exactly as long as the tower was high. The church was known to have accomodated five thousand standing worshippers at special services.



FIRST CHURCH, Boston, Mass.

Fleeing from persecution in 1633, John Cotton sailed for Boston, Massachusetts, where he was ordained teacher of the First Church (Congregational.) This view is representative of the descriptions of early writers, who stated that the primitive building had mud walls and a thatched roof.

These contrasting pictures speak louder than words regarding the sacrifices many Puritans made when leaving the cultural heritage of their Mother Country for the privations of the New England wilderness.

hearted loyalty and Christian liberty; between the fear of God and love of one another.” He thanked his bishop for the admonishments given “with such wisdom and gravity, and with such well-tempered authority and mildness.” This magnanimous letter indicates not only his conciliatory, forgiving spirit, but also his desire to remain affiliated with the Church of England, which he never forsook.

What Cotton’s departure meant in loss to old Boston and gain to new Boston was expressed by Longfellow two centuries later:

The lantern of St. Botolph’s ceased to burn,  
When from the portals of that church he came  
To be a burning and a shining light  
Here in the wilderness.”<sup>5</sup>

In the summer of 1633, John Cotton left England with considerable difficulty, “all places being belaid,” as Winthrop expressed it.<sup>6</sup> With rare good fortune, he was able to bring with him his greatest material possession – his library. He valued it at approximately what it had cost him, a hundred and fifty pounds. But the intellectual and professional value of Cotton’s library to him, and indeed to the whole colony, is beyond price to reckon. So was founded on the American frontier the incomparable family library that would grow in size and value through four generations. His great grandson, Samuel Mather, described his own library, largely inherited, as composed of “seven or eight thousand volumes of the most curious and chosen authors, and a prodigious number of valuable manuscripts – ” doubtless the greatest collection of books and manuscripts in the American colonies.

Cotton sailed on the *Griffin*, a ship of three hundred tons, which carried about two hundred passengers, including Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and others “of good estate.” Their voyage lasted eight weeks, during which four persons died and one child was born – the first son of John and Sarah Cotton. On their arrival in Boston, the child was baptized with the name of Seaborn. (So began the odd Christian names, such as Shubael, Wait Still, and Increase\*, given to sons of the first settlers who themselves bore orthodox biblical names like Samuel and David, James and John.) Now in his fiftieth year, and the most eminent English clergyman yet to cross the Atlantic, Master John Cotton saw the mark of divine favor as he entered the Land of Promise with his “comfortable Yoke-fellow” and their first-born child.

**H**IS NEW ENGLAND ministry from 1633 to 1652 was devoted to several fields of interest and activity. He was elected “Teacher” of the Boston church soon after his arrival, a co-minister with the Rev.

\*English baptismal records include these curious names: *More-fruits*, *Weep-not*, *Stand-fast-on-high*, *Kill-sin*, and *Fly-fornication*.



AN  
ABSTRACT  
OR THE  
LAWES  
OF  
NEW ENGLAND,  
As they are novv established.

---



LONDON,  
Printed for *F. Coules*, and *W. Ley* at Paulcs Chain,  
1641.

John Wilson, who had served as “Pastor” since the gathering of the church in 1630. (The distinction between the two offices is hazy, although the teacher usually did more of the preaching and lecturing, while the pastor was primarily concerned with parish calling and administration.) Cotton continued the indefatigable schedule he had earlier adopted at Emmanuel College and St. Botolph’s church. He kept a four-hour glass in his study, and after he had turned it thrice, he had completed “a scholar’s day.” He instituted the Thursday Lecture in Boston, which would be adopted by other New England churches, and discontinued only during the British siege of 1775. His Sunday schedule often included two sermons of the usual lengthy duration.

His sermons, either printed or still in manuscript, expound the Calvinistic theology in “plain style”, closely reasoned and severely outlined. He must have had in mind a number of his congregation who took notes, and later discussed his sermons in family conversation. One outstanding note-taker was Captain Robert Keayne, who diligently recorded Cotton’s sermons from 1639 through 1642. As one reads (in the Massachusetts Historical Society library) the faded notebook of nearly five hundred pages, one can catch a glimpse of Cotton’s pulpit magnetism. He told his people who they were – a people chosen to tame the wilderness and to build a divinely-ordered commonwealth in a new land. He offered them hope in their disappointments, comfort in their griefs, and courage for their limitless tasks.

Yet it is possible, as some historians have been inclined to do, to overrate the power and influence of John Cotton in the Bay Colony. Moses Coit Tyler, writing in *A History of American Literature*, found the immensity of his influence “a riddle to us;” nevertheless termed him “the unmitered pope of a pope-hating commonwealth.”<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, James Truslow Adams, writing a brief sketch of Cotton’s life in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, said that “whatever he pronounced in the pulpit soon became either the law of the land or the practice of the church.”

One searches Cotton’s sermons in vain, however, to find their contentions borne out. He seldom made reference to politics or social action in the pulpit, although Winthrop’s *Journal* notes that once Cotton preached on the ethics of the marketplace. His sermons were biblically oriented, expository, and exegetical. If he bore any resemblance to “an unmitered pope”, as the caustic phrase itself implies, his power was spiritual rather than civil, and his leadership was communally-sought rather than self-seeking.

As a prime example, Cotton prepared an *Abstract or [of] Lawes and Government* in 1636. It was written at the request of the General Court of

A BRIEFE  
EXPOSITION  
Of the whole Book of  
CANTICLES,  
O R,  
SONG OF SOLOMON:

Lively describing the Estate of the Church  
in all the Ages thereof, both Jewish  
and Christian, to this day.

And modestly pointing at the Gloriousnesse of  
the restored Estate of the Church of the Jewes,  
and the happy accessse of the Gentiles, in the ap-  
proaching dayes of Reformation, when the  
Wall of Partition shall be taken away.

A Work very usefull and seasonable to every Christi-  
an; but especially such as endeavour and thirst after the  
settling of Church and State, according to the Rule  
and Patternes of the Word of God.

---

Written by that Learned and Godly Divine *John*  
*Cotton*, Batchelor of Divinity; and now Pastor of the  
Congregation at *Boston* in *New-England*.

---

L O N D O N,  
Printed by *J. Young* for *Charles Green*, and are to be  
sold at the Signe of the Gun in *Ivie-Lane*. 1644.



Massachusetts to serve as a model for legal discussion. The legislators, however, did not adopt the “Cotton Code” – and he probably would have been surprised if they had.

In the *Abstract* are to be found intimations of the democratic process, quite novel and radical in early 17th century political theory. In Chapter II, concerned with “Free Burgesses and free Inhabitants,” Cotton proposes: “All the householders in every town shall be accounted free inhabitants of the Country, and shall accordingly enjoy freedom of common; and inheritance of such lands as the generall Court, or the severall Towns wherein they dwell shall allot to them.” (No mention is made of a church-membership requirement.) Other chapters are concerned with Magistrates, Trespasses, Crimes, and “Tryall of Causes, whether civill or criminall.”

The original manuscript copy of Cotton’s *Abstract* was found among his papers after his death. It was, however, printed in two London editions, 1641 and 1655. Although not adopted by the General Court of Massachusetts, it attained historical significance. It was the first code of laws to be compiled on American soil, after due solicitation from a legislative body.\* John Davenport carried a copy of the code with him to New Haven, where it served as the constitution of the colony during its independent existence until 1664. The *Abstract* was also adopted by the freeholders of Southampton, Long Island in 1640. While not adopted *in toto* by the Bay Colony magistrates, they used the Cotton Code as a model in drawing up “The Body of Liberties” in 1641, and the expanded “Book of the Lawes and Libertyes” in 1647. The influence of his political thought, with emphasis on civil rights, continued throughout the formative New England years, though scarcely in the guise of “an unmitered pope!”

It is impossible in this biographical sketch to review the printed works of John Cotton, which his bibliographer, Julius H. Tuttle, lists in more than forty titles. Most of them were devoted to biblical exegesis – and most of them were pirated by London printers! “His Printed Works, of which there are many,” noted Cotton Mather in the *Magnalia*, “praise him in the Gates, tho’ few of them were printed by his own Knowledge or Consent.” Several were printed a generation or so after he wrote them. (Professor Larzer Ziff in *The Career of John Cotton*, published in 1962, has done some keen “master-minding” in assigning dates of composition to various of his works.)

A good example of Cotton’s expository teaching is found in *A Brief Exposition of the Whole Book of Canticles*. It was not printed until 1642, but it may be assumed that it was written during his English ministry, on the

\*Governor George Yeardley of Virginia called a legislative assembly in 1619, the first in America. It placed Virginia under English Common Law.

G O D S  
M E R C I E

MIXED WITH HIS  
I V S T I C E,

O R,  
HIS PEOPLES DELI-  
verance in times of danger.

*Laid open in severall* S E R M O N S.

---

By that learned and judicious Divine, and faith-  
full Minister of J E S U S C H R I S T  
J O H N C O T T O N.

---



L O N D O N,  
Printed by G. M. for Edward Brewster, and Henry  
Hood at the Bible on Fleet-Bridge, and in  
S. Dunstons Church-yard, 1641.

testimony of his friend, John Norton, who said that during his St. Botolph's years Cotton "preached through . . . the whole book of Solomon's Song." For that matter, he probably used the same material in some of his Thursday lectures in the new Boston. This interest in biblical poetry no doubt motivated him to write the preface, as well as some of the versification, in English America's first printed book, *The Bay Psalm Book*. Because Richard Mather served as "editor-in-chief," this rarest of rare books will be discussed in the next chapter.

*Christ the Fountaine of Life* is a volume of sixteen sermons printed in London in 1651. The composition date, again on the testimony of Norton, may be advanced to his Boston, Lincolnshire ministry. The sermons are an exposition of I John 5, and they cover a wide range of subjects: "joy and grieffe in the soule sanctified," "patience without forebearance," "liberty from feare of sinne;" "modesty mixed with maganimity," "plyableness of spirit," and "faith profitable to all things." In these subjects and their development, we see Cotton's lively interest in semantics, not unlike that of many contemporary theologians. These sermons, concerned with human need and spiritual growth, represent Cotton at his intellectual best.

*God's Mercie Mixed with his Justice*, as the title indicates, is primarily devoted to the attributes and acts of the Almighty. This book, printed in London in 1641, is also a compilation of several of his sermons delivered earlier in England. It was edited with a preface by Matthias Swallowe, who described it as "some broken notes of his powerful soul-searching sermons taken from his mouth by the diligent hand of some well-disposed hearers and followers." In spite of such transcription and its likelihood of error or omission, Cotton's God shines through as both merciful and just, concerned with human welfare, and restrained in his punishment of human sin. Yet, "God . . . considers what sorry things we be, and that if He should but stir up His wrath, we should be utterly undone."

*Milk for Babes, Drawn out of the Breasts of both Testaments*, (London, 1646,) was Cotton's most popular and widely-read book. A catechism, which children could easily read and memorize, and their parents could ponder and discuss, was printed in nine editions during the latter half of the 17th century. Condensed, it appeared in the 1771, 1777, 1782 & 1887 editions of the *New England Primer*. A central question of the catechism was: "What hath God done for you?" and was answered: "God hath made me, He keepeth me, and He can save me." Cotton defined sin as "the transgression of the Law," and he expounded the Law in terms of the Ten Commandments. Since all men have broken the Law, they are sinners and can only be saved by Jesus Christ, "the eternal Son of God, who for our sakes became man that He might



redeem and save us." In orthodox Puritan terms Cotton defined the church as "a congregation of saints joined together in the bond of the Covenant to worship the Lord and to edify one another in all His holy ordinances."

These and other answers were well learned in the Bay colony where an ordinance required heads of households to catechize "their children and servants in the grounds and principles of religion." The influence of Cotton's catechism spread westward as migrating pioneers penetrated farther into the wilderness, carrying the *New England Primer* along with their Bibles.

T




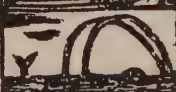


U

W

X

Y

Z



Whales in the Sea,  
GOD's Voice obey.

XERXES did die.  
And so must I.

While youth do cheer  
Death may be near.

ZACCHAEUS he  
Did climb the Tree  
Our Lord to see.

Who killed Goliath?  
Who was the wisest Man?  
Who was in the Whale's Belly?  
Who saves lost Men?  
Who is Jesus Christ?  
Who was the Mother of Christ?  
Who betrayed his Master?  
Who denied his Master?  
Who was the first Christian Martyr?  
Who was chief Apostle of the Gentiles?

The Infant's Grace before and after Meat.  
BLESS me, O Lord, and let my food  
strengthen me to serve thee, for Jesus  
Christ's sake. AMEN

**MILK**  
**FOR**  
**BABES.**

DRAWN  
Out of the Breasts of both  
TESTAMENTS.

Chiefly, for the spirituall nourishment  
of Boston Babes in either England:  
But may be of like use for any  
Children.

By JOHN COTTON, B. I.  
and Teacher to the Church of Bolton  
in New-England.  
1646.

ed? Absl.  
Enoch.  
Methuselah.  
Noah.  
an? Job.  
a? Moses.  
e? Joshua.  
man? Sampson.  
David.  
Solomon.  
Jonah.  
Jesus Christ.  
The Son of God.  
Mary.  
Judas.  
Peter.  
Stephen.  
Paul.

Title Page (above) from Cotton's *Milk for Babes* (London, 1646)

Facing Pages (below) of *The New England Primer* (1777 edition)

18

**C**ONTROVERSIES ran counter to Cotton's benevolent nature and scholarly aptitudes, yet he was a principal figure in the two major Bay Colony controversies of his generation. Their stories have often been told in graphic detail as well as partisan heat. They must here be condensed to bare bones.

The first is known as "the Antinomian controversy," with Anne Hutchinson as the central character. She had been one of Cotton's most ardent fans in Lincolnshire, where she frequently journeyed from suburban Alford into St. Botolph's church, Boston, to hear him preach. She and her husband, William, migrated to Boston, Massachusetts in 1634. Winthrop promptly described her in his *Journal* as "of ready wit and bold spirit" – a woman who would bear official watching. Because of her capabilities as a practical nurse and midwife, she was welcomed into many homes. She liked to talk, particularly about her minister and his theology – topics which may or may not have been of interest to her convalescing patients. In due time, she sought a larger audience by organizing meetings of Boston women. This was something new for a colony where in Salem, by contrast, Roger Williams was persuading his female parishioners to wear the veil of Old Testament subservience. Mrs. Hutchinson's "bold spirit" grew in her meetings when she divided the ministers of the colony into the two covenants of *grace* and *works*. Only two ministers, she contended, lived under the covenant of grace, made evident by "a peculiar indwelling of the Holy Ghost." She identified them as John Cotton and her brother-in-law, John Wheelwright. The other ministers of the colony she classified in the less exalted Antinomian covenant of works.

We can well understand the embarrassment that Anne Hutchinson's classification caused John Cotton in relation to his brother-ministers, including his associate, John Wilson. But far more difficult to understand is the furious schism which split the colony, occasioned by the opinions of one woman addressing no more than seventy of her own sex.

A detailed account of her trial is told by her great, great grandson, Governor Thomas Hutchinson, in his *History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*, first published in 1764. At the General Court trial held in Newtown (Cambridge) in late 1637, Mrs. Hutchinson gave spirited replies of "what have I said or done?" and "prove that I said so!" to Governor Winthrop's prosecutorial questioning. Cotton was called to the witness-stand, and in answer to a question by Deputy-Governor Thomas Dudley, "Do you believe her revelations are true?" replied, "That she may have special providence of God to help her is a thing that I cannot bear witness against." After further examination of the principal defendant, the court passed sentence which is on record: "Mrs. Hutchinson, the wife of Mr. William

Hutchinson, being convented for traducing the ministers and their ministry in the country . . . thereupon was banished."

Alas, poor woman! She later had to stand trial in the Boston church for excommunication. Cotton sought to defend her by blaming himself for "my sleepiness & want of watchful care over you." The climax to the church trial came when Anne Hutchinson asserted: "I did not hould any of these thinges before my imprisonment" (of four months following her conviction by the General Court.) Although Cotton tried to smother the remark by a confession of his own, the obvious falsehood would not down. The verdict, according to the 1638 records of the First Church in Boston, "cast (her) out of the Church for impenitently persisting in a manifest lye then expressed by her in open Congregation."

William Hutchinson sold his Boston estate and moved with his wife and children to Aquidneck (Rhode Island,) where he purchased land from the Indians. He died in or about the year 1642. Mrs. Hutchsion, dissatisfied with her lot there, moved on to "the Dutch country." In 1643, at the present site of East Chester, New York, she and her family were killed by the Indians, except for one daughter who was carried into captivity and survived.

Cotton did not meet the tragic fate of his devoted parishioner, Anne Hutchinson, but his influence waned considerably in the aftermath. The chief magistrates, Winthrop and Dudley, found his views suspect, as did his brother-ministers, Thomas Shephard of Cambridge and Hugh Peters of Salem. The latter publicly advocated that Cotton be brought to trial, which never came to pass. In several writings he continued to expound the covenant of grace as superior to the covenant of works, although a modern reader finds some of his distinctions blurred. In reviewing the whole Antinomian controversy, Charles Francis Adams in his *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History* concluded that all the participants were "lost in a thick fog of indefinable ideas and meaningless phrases."

The other famous controversy in which Cotton engaged was with Roger Williams. It is probable that the two ministers met in England before Williams and his wife sailed on the *Lyon* in December, 1630, thus preceeding the Cottons by nearly three years. Winthrop noted in his *Journal* that Roger Williams, on arrival in Salem, was "a godly Minister," but he soon needed other adjectives to describe him.

While John Wilson was preparing to return to England for a season in 1631, the Boston church extended a call to Williams to become its interim minister. He promptly declined by saying that he "durst not officiate to an unseparated people." His strong anti-Church of England views did not endear him to the Boston congregation. He also made it plain that he



thought the magistrates had no right to enforce “the first Table” – that is, the injunctions of the Ten Commandments against idolatry, profanity, and Sabbath-breaking.

Williams accepted the call of the Salem church, but because it was given without consultation with other churches, and because of his objectionable opinions, the magistrates intervened. Williams decided that the Separatists at Plymouth would be more congenial; he went there and served their church for about two years. He returned to Salem and became increasingly outspoken against the Bay Colony authorities. After a series of summonses, which Williams ignored, the General Court on 9 October 1635, found him guilty of advancing “newe & dangerous opinions against the auctoritie of the magistrates,” (*Records of . . . Mass. Bay*, I, 160,) and ordered him banished. He attempted to persuade and organize his Salem followers to migrate with him to Narragansett; but the magistrates, hearing of his plan and disapproving it, ordered him arrested. Being warned, Williams escaped in mid-winter, received shelter from friendly Indians at Sowans, and finally gathered enough followers to found the first Rhode Island settlement at Providence in 1636.

Cotton wrote him a letter shortly after his banishment, but it was not printed until 1643 – in London. It was the letter of one Christian gentleman to another, with no sign of rancor or recrimination. Cotton assured him that his banishment “was neither done by my counsell or consent.” But, “to speake freely what I thinke, were my soule in your soules stead, I should think it a worke of mercy of God to banish me from a society of such a Commonwealth, when I could not injoy holy felowship with any Church of God amongst them without sin.”

Williams’ reply was equally gentlemanly and straightforward. It was published in London the following year (1644,) under the title, *Mr. Cotton’s Letter Lately Printed, Examined, and Answered*. While he could not agree with Cotton’s assertion that he had “turned himself off” from fellowship with the churches, he did agree with “4 Particulars” which a magistrate listed against him at his trial: namely, “that we have not our land by Pattent from the King, but that the Natives are the true owners of it;” (2) “that it is not lawfull to call a wicked person to Sweare, to Pray, as being actions of God’s Worship;” (3) “that it is not lawfull to heare any of the Ministers of the Parish Assemblies in England;” and (4) “that the Civil Magistrates power extends only to the Bodies and Goods, and outward state of men, &c.”

It was on the ground of these four propositions that Cotton and Williams fought their famous pamphlet-battle, centering at times on liberty of conscience and at other times on the political and ecclesiastical reasons for

# THE BLOODY TENENT,

WASHED,

And made white in the blood of the  
Lambe: being discussed and discharged of  
blood-guiltinesse by just Defence.

## WHEREIN

The great Questions of this present time are  
handled, *viz.* How farre Liberty of Conscience  
ought to be given to those that truly feare God? And how farre  
restrained to turbulent and pestilent Hereticks, persons that not  
onely raze the foundation of Godlinesse, but disturb the Civill  
Peace where they lived? Also how farre the Magistrate may pro-  
ceed in the duties of the first Table? And that all Magistrates  
ought to study the word and will of God, that they may frame  
their Government according to it.

## DISCUSSED.

As they are alledged from divers Scriptures, out of  
the Old and New Testament. Wherein also the practise of  
Princes is debated, together with the Judgement of An-  
cient and late Writers of most precious esteeme.

*whereunto is added a Reply to Mr. WILLIAMS  
Answer, to Mr. COTTONS Letter.*

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BY JOHN COTTON Batchelor in Divinity, and  
Teacher of the Church of Christ at Boston in New-England.

---

L O N D O N,

Printed by *Matthew Symmons* for *Hannah Allen*, at the *Crowne* in  
*Popes-Head-Alley.* 1 6 4 7.

William's banishment. The printed arguments grew more intense, but not as sanguinary as the titles suggest. Williams' *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution* was printed in 1644; Cotton's *The Controversie Concerning Liberty of Conscience in Matters of Religion* in 1646; Cotton's *The Bloody Tenet Washed and Made White in the Bloud of the Lamb* in 1647; and Williams' *The Bloody Tenet Yet More Bloody* in 1652, the year of Cotton's death.

These pamphlets, whimsical though their titles, were the first on American soil to carry on a lengthy, systematic discussion of the age-old problems of church and state relations, liberty of conscience, and unity versus schism among the churches. In the light of American historical development, Williams is seen to have won in favor of freedom of worship, liberty of conscience, and separation of church and state. The liberal political tradition was well established in Rhode Island a century and a half before it became known in national politics as "Jeffersonian."

It is clear, however, that Roger Williams was a fiery controversialist and confirmed schismatic. He did more than castigate the Church of England, and the Massachusetts Puritans for their lack of separation; he reserved some of his strongest invective for the Quakers in his publication, *George Fox Digged Out of His Burrowes*, (London, 1676.) The ecumenical spirit and outlook of John Cotton is far more appealing to contemporary churchmen than the separatist, schismatic way of Roger Williams. We who are devoted to the cause of Christian unity and brotherliness among the churches can no more pray, than could the Reverend Mr. Cotton, "for a blessing upon their separation, which we see not to be of God nor to be led to him."

SEVERAL of John Cotton's literary, educational, and ecclesiastical contributions paralleled those of Richard Mather, and will be discussed in the following chapter. Both wrote extensively on "the Congregational Way," especially for the enlightenment of English readers. Both were architects of *The Cambridge Platform* of 1648. Both were leaders in the founding of "The Colledge," later named in memory of the Rev. John Harvard, and both served on its first Board of Overseers.

In a sense, John Cotton gave his life in line of duty for the college he had helped to found and nurture. He caught a heavy cold while crossing on the Charles River ferry from Boston to Cambridge on a preaching mission to Harvard scholars. He suffered an inflammation of the lungs, and in that state he awaited "the mercy stroke of death." Many friends called at his home, including Harvard's first president Henry Dunster, who asked for a blessing from the dying patriarch, saying: "I know they whom *you* bless shall be blessed."



In his final years, Cotton was cheered by the continuing recognition he received in England. He was invited to become a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, but presumably because of the frailties of age he declined. He was further cheered by a letter from Oliver Cromwell, then the Lord Protector. Cromwell took "this liberty from business to salute my dear friend." He told of recent events in England, and confessed his own sense of unworthiness in leading the nation. "We need your prayers in this as much as ever," concluded Cromwell, who signed himself, "Your affectionate friend to serve you."<sup>8</sup>

John Cotton died on 23 December 1652, and was buried on Cotton Hill near his home – the present site being the burying-ground beside King's Chapel in downtown Boston. The whole colony went into mourning, as John Norton of Ipswich, (who would be his successor in the Boston pulpit,) sounded the general threnody, "Abel being Dead yet Speaketh."

Sarah Story Cotton had shared her husband's trials and triumphs in the American wilderness for a full score of years. Considering the doleful lot of a pioneer widow, it is no dark reflection on her previous marital bliss that she remarried within a year. She accepted the proposal of the Rev. Richard Mather, a widower of eighteen months. This was the first intermarriage of Cottons and Mathers, but not the last.





*Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society*

RICHARD MATHER: Oil Portrait by Unknown Artist



# RICHARD MATHER

(1596-1669)



RICHARD Mather and John Cotton, who were to become leaders of the New England theocracy and progenitors of an inter-marrying family, probably first met in “the new Boston” in 1635. Cotton, twelve years the older, was teaching at Cambridge when Mather matriculated at Oxford. Although both identified themselves with the Puritan movement in early manhood, their paths did not cross. When preparations for the Great Migration were being made in the late 1620s, Cotton was at the center of activity in Boston, Lincolnshire, while Mather was the minister of an obscure village church in Lancashire. During their New England ministries, however, they were a complimentary and productive team. Cotton was the more eminent scholar and preacher, while Mather was the moderator of synods and architect of the *Cambridge Platform*.

His distinguishing characteristic was spotted early in his ministry by an older Lancashire pastor who heard him preach. After inquiring what his name was, and being told it was *Mather*, “Nay (said Mr. Gillebrand) call him *Matter*, for believe it, this man has substance in him.”<sup>1</sup>

His childhood afforded him ample opportunity to develop practical skills, for he had to make do with a minimum of worldly goods and advantages. His parents, Thomas and Margarite Mather, were “by reason of some unhappy mortgages reduced unto a low condition,” in 1596, when Richard was born in the village of Lowton, some twenty miles from maritime Liverpool.

With parental sacrifice he was sent to Winwick school in a neighboring town. He would later thank “singular good Providence” for his grammar schooling, but while enduring it he had some singular grave doubts about its price. He had the misfortune to study under a severe schoolmaster who “would beat him eight times in a day whether in fault or not.”

Often he pled with his father to take him from the school, but without avail. Years later during his New England ministry he rejoiced in his father’s unyielding decision, even while advocating pedagogical reform: “Oh that all schoolmasters would learn Wisdome, Moderation, and Equity toward their Scholars, and seek rather to win the hearts of children by righteous, loving,



and courteous usage, than to alienate their minds by partiality and undue severity, which had been my utter undoing, had not the good Providence of God, and the Wisdome and Authority of my Father prevented.”<sup>2</sup>

While Richard was in Winwick school, the economic status of his father further declined. It sank so low that when “some Popish Merchants coming out of Wales to Warrington” sought to apprentice the lad, Thomas Mather was inclined to make the deal. Richard was quite understandably prepared for an adventure that would effect his escape from school.

“Yea and here,” Cotton Mather effusively recounted a century later the story of his paternal grandfather’s good fortune: “Almighty God made use of this otherwise cruel School-Master to deliver this hopeful young man from an apprenticeship unto a Popish Merchant, when he was very near falling into the woful Snares of such a Condition.”<sup>3</sup> The schoolmaster argued with his father that “a Wit so prone to Learning” should be kept in school. The plea of the master prevailed, along with a probable reduction in tuition, which enabled Richard to remain in the Winwick school until the age of fifteen.

While in the last months of grammar school, he was introduced to a religious faith that appealed to him. His parents were certainly not Puritans, else they would not have countenanced his apprenticeship to a Roman Catholic merchant. It was from “one Mr. Palin, then preacher at Leagh,” that the fifteen-year old Richard gained “some Illumination, though not a thorough Conversion.” It would come three years later while studying the theology of William Perkins, whose Calvinistic preaching at Cambridge had earlier “convicted” John Cotton. The pangs of the new birth were severe while they lasted, but “the Lord revived his broken heart” more speedily than Cotton’s. The solid, practical Mather simply could not *afford* a long period of emotional distress!

The Winwick schoolmaster had upon his graduation done him another favor. He recommended him to the people of Toxteth Park, near Liverpool, who were starting a new school. In 1611, they invited him to become the schoolmaster and he accepted. (Some three score years later, his son, Increase, felt it necessary to say that it was not “any disparagement to his Worth that he was once a School-master, for very eminent Divines have been so.” Furthermore, “he became a more accurate Grammarian than Divines usually are.”<sup>4</sup>

His reputation as a benign and competent schoolmaster spread throughout the area, and he enrolled pupils from surrounding towns. But he had not forsaken his long cherished ambition to obtain a university education. After several years of prudent saving from his meager salary, he

went to Oxford in 1618, and matriculated in Brasenose College. He left before he was awarded a degree, for the people of Toxteth urged that "he would return unto them to instruct not so much their children as themselves, and that not in mere Humane Literature, but in the things of God." Their popular ex-schoolmaster returned to become their minister.

Being settled in a parish, he was faced with two urgent obligations. One was to be ordained and the other was to get married. His Episcopal ordination went off without incident, although at one point the Bishop of Chester whispered to him, "I have something to say to you betwixt you and me alone." Mather was afraid that the bishop had learned of his Puritan leanings, but as it turned out, the bishop humbly requested his prayers – a compliment he never forgot.

As his thoughts turned to matrimony, he began courting Katharine Hoult, the daughter of Edmund Hoult, Esq., of Bury, Lancashire. The latter raised objections because he "was not affected toward non-conformable Puritans," but in due time he gave his consent. On 29 September 1624, the young minister and "the very godly and prudent maid" were married.

Since Toxteth was not a prominent pulpit, Mather's preaching was not under close hierocratic surveillance. It was only when he gave a series of lectures in the town of Prescott that his non-conformity came to wider attention. Complaints were lodged against him, and he was "by the Prelates suspended" in August, 1633. Only when some influential gentlemen in Lancaster interceded in his behalf was he restored to his parish ministry.

But this state of ecclesiastical grace did not last long. The following year the Archbishop of York sent his "Visitors," who served in the dual roles of prosecutor and judge, into Lancaster. They set up a court in Wigan, where Mather appeared before them. He was asked how often he wore the surplice, and he answered: "Never!" "What! (said the Visitor, swearing as he spake it) It had been better for him that he had gotten Seven Bastards."<sup>5</sup> After more of such spirited language in the court, the Visitors passed a sentence of suspension against him, and this one stuck.

It became increasingly clear to him through his distressing experiences of 1633-34, that he could not longer continue his ministry in England. He corresponded with John Cotton and Thomas Hooker about emigrating to Massachusetts. The latter assured him: "Though there are very many places where men may receive and expect more Earthly Commodities, yet I do believe there is no place this day upon the face of the Earth, where a gracious heart and judicious head may receive more spiritual good to himself, and do more temporal and spiritual good to others."<sup>6</sup>

Appealing as Hooker's assurance was, Mather was not one to act impetuously. He had to make sure through reason as well as faith that his future course lay in so hazardous a design. Consequently, he drew up for his own use, and likely for discussion with Puritan friends, a series of "Arguments tending to prove the Removing from Old Engand to New, or to some other such place, to be not only lawful, but also necessary for them that are not otherwise tyed, but free." The Arguments cover eleven printed pages in Increase Mather's *Life and Death* of his father, but they are not deserving of such space here. Their interest lies in the soul-searching quest which Richard Mather and many another Puritans undertook before emigrating from their native land. He did not find his answer in Cyprian, as Cotton had; rather, in a long process of thought, prayer, and discussion. He finally concluded that by "removing to New England, he would not *go out of his way*."<sup>7</sup>

**R**ICHARD MATHER completed his plans to transport himself, his wife and four sons to the Massachusetts Commonwealth. Having served for a score of years as beloved schoolmaster and minister in Toxteth, he shared a tearful farewell with friends and parishioners. According to accounts by both Increase and Cotton Mather, Richard travelled *incognito* from Toxteth to Bristol that he might escape the pursuivants who had orders to apprehend him. The Puritan underground was well established in the west country as it was in London, when John Cotton and others escaped through it.

Most of Richard Mather's *Journal* is lost; Increase informs us that his father kept one until his thirty-ninth year. What is extant is a latter section, if not the very last. It covers the brief period from April to August, 1635, when he and his family journeyed from Toxteth to Bristol, and then sailed from Bristol to Boston.<sup>8</sup> Apart from navigational data in ships'-logs, there are relatively few day-by-day accounts of Atlantic voyages in the early seventeenth century. Mather's *Journal* gives a detailed and interesting recital of seafaring adventure, privation, and boredom.

Seven days were spent travelling the 120 miles to Bristol. Then came a long frustrating delay while the ship was being readied. "We went not aboard ye ship untill Saturday the 23rd of May: so that the time of our staying in Bristoll was a month and two days, during all wch time wee found friendship and curtesy at the hands of divers godly Christians in Bristoll. Yet our stay was grievous unto us, when wee considered how most of this time the windes were easterly and served directly for us; But our ship was not ready: so ill did our owners deal with us."

When finally they were permitted to go aboard, they met with one



disappointment after another. "We found things very unready, and all on heaps, with many goods being not stowed." On the following two days the winds were favorable, but "ye mariners would insiste that they could not stirre till ye goodes were stowed and hatches on deck above cleared, &c." When those chores were done and the ship was ready to sail, the winds veered westerly. So they prevailed for more than a week, while the ship's captain remained ashore and the long-suffering passengers remained aboard. It was not until June 4th, after twelve days of riding it out in Bristol harbor, that "the wind serving us, and our Master and all the saylors being come aboard, we set sayle . . ." The *James* carried "100 passengers, besides 23 seamen, & 23 coves and heyfers, 3 sucking calves & eight mares."

Mather's *Journal* makes no comment about the crowded condition of the passengers, nor the inescapable sounds and smells from the animals. In fact, he does not enter a word of complaint against any person or condition. There are daily entries about wind and weather, for they were of utmost concern. Monotony was broken on June 29th when "our seamen stroke a great porpyse, and haled it with ropes into ye ship, like a swyne from ye sty to the tressle . . . a marvellous merry sport and delightful to our women and children."

A different type of experience awaited them on July 28th: "A great calme, & very hot all yt forenoone: our people & cattel being much afflicted with faintnesse, sweating & heate . . . This afternoone there came and light upon our ship a little land-bird with blew-feathers, about the bigness of a sparrow, by which some conceyved we were not farre from land."

It was not, however, until August 8th that "wee had a cleare & comfortable sight of America, and made land againe at an Iland called Menhiggin [Monhegan,] an Iland without inhabitants." The next day, their twelvth Sabbath on shipboard, they sailed along the Maine coast, and on August 10th they dropped anchor at Richmond's Island, off what is now Cape Elizabeth, Maine. The two families living on the island, once they were assured that the *James* was not a French ship intent on pillage, welcomed the voyagers ashore, and provided fresh water and grass for their cattle.

After spending two refreshing days on Richmond's Island, they set sail for Boston. The next three days they had changing and contrary winds, alternating with calm. On the evening of August 14th, "by moone-light about ten of ye clocke, we came to ancre at ye Iles of Shoales, which are 7 or 8 Ilands and other great rockes; and there slept sweetely yt night till breake of day."

They had no warning whatever of the fury that would be unleashed against them that day. "Ye Lord sent forth a most terrible storme of raine

and easterly wind, whereby we were in as much danger as I thinke ever people were: for we lost in yt morning three great ancrs and cables . . . Wee had not outward means of deliverance but by loosing sayle, if so bee wee might get to ye sea from amongst ye llands and rockes where wee ancred; but Ye Lord let us see yt our sayles could not save us neither, no more yn our cables and ancrs; for by ye force of ye winde & raine, ye sayles were rent in sunder & split in pieces, as if they had been rotonn ragges.”

This storm (“which the *Americans* are wont to call an *Hiracano*”) was also described by Governor Winthrop in his *Journal*. He told of other ships which fared worse than the *James*, notably the *Great Hope* twice driven aground, and the *Gabriel* lost at Pemaquid. The tide at Narragansett rose fourteen feet higher than usual, and drowned eight Indians who were trying to escape. All in all, it was the worst hurricane in the annals of early New England history.

In spite of the twelve-week voyage of the *James*, climaxed by hurricane, Mather noted that not a single person or animal died, “and most of ye passengers in as good health as ever, and none better tn myne owne family, and my weake wife and little Joseph as well as any other.” The final pages of the *Journal*, which ends with their safe arrival in Boston harbor, is interspersed with *Te Deums*. “His holy name be blest forever . . . Ye Lord graunted us as wonderful a deliverance as I thinke ever people had, out of as apparent danger as I think ever people felt . . . The Lord so imprint ye memory of it on our hearts, yt wee may bee better for it . . . Agayne, let our gracious God be blessed forever.”

ON arriving in Boston, Richard Mather and his family had no home or parish to which to go. They received the hospitality of friends for several months, during which time they became members of the Boston church, of which John Cotton was teacher. A man of Mather’s temperament – “sparing in his Diet, sparing in his speech, most sparing of all of his Time” – could not remain unemployed long, especially in a growing colony that needed ministers of his talent. He received calls from the Pilgrim church in Plymouth, as well as from churches in Roxbury and Dorchester. He sought counsel from Cotton and Hooker. They advised him to accept the call from Dorchester, which was the most difficult of the settlements offered him. The original Dorchester congregation had recently moved to Winsor, Connecticut, under the leadership of the Rev. John Warham. A new church would have to be gathered. But Dorchester, then a much larger territory than now, was rapidly being settled anew, and gave promise of rivalling Boston as a seaport. Mather accepted the challenge, and settled in Dorchester for a thirty-four year ministry.

# Church-Government

AND

# Church-Covenant

DISCVSSED,

In an Answer of the Elders of the severall Churches in

*NEW-ENGLAND*

To two and thirty Questions, sent over to them by divers Ministers in *England*, to declare their judgments therein.

Together with an Apologie of the said Elders in *New-England* for Church-Covenant, sent over in Answer to Master *Bernard* in the year 1639.

As also in an Answer to nine Positions about Church-Government.

And now published for the satisfaction of all who desire resolution in those points.

---

L O N D O N,

Printed by R. O. and G. D. for Benjamin Allen,  
*Anno Dom. 1643.*



In his early months there, he was not without his melancholy doubts and spiritual struggles. But he won over them, apparently without publicizing them to his congregation, through the help of his friend, the Rev. John Norton of Ipswich. This friendship would continue unusually close throughout their lifetimes. Among later associations, they were the two-man committee who notified the Rev. Charles Chauncy in 1654 of his election to the presidency of Harvard college.

Mather really found himself and his mission by becoming an interpreter, and later an architect, of “the New England Way.” Some of his brethren in Lancashire sent him a series of *Two and Thirty Questions*, (as officially they came later to be known.) They covered a wide range of ecclesiastical polity and procedure. The English ministers were particularly interested in church constitutions, and what provisions they had for lay membership, ministerial standing, the organization and power of synods, and the like. In 1639, Mather dispatched the answers in manuscript form. He ascribed the authorship to “the Elders of the severall Churches in New England,” inasmuch as he had conferred with other ministers about the answers. But John Cotton termed Richard Mather “the sole author,” which was later attested by two of his own sons, Nathaniel and Increase. The printed work was entitled *Church-Government and Church-Covenant Discussed*. (London, 1643.)

He described the New England churches as being “neither meerly Democraticall or meerely Aristocraticall.” A company of Christians, however small, could follow a democratic procedure of forming their own church, self-governing in all respects, and of choosing and ordaining their own officers. But once the officers were elected and installed, their responsibilities and prerogatives exceeded those of the brethren. Church synods were regularly held for fellowship and mutual edification, but no synod had the power to dictate to any parish church. (Herein lay the principal difference between Congregational and Presbyterian polity, which was then being debated among Puritans in England.)

There were rumors in Lancashire – as there have been assertions by contemporary historians – that only a minority of the Bay Colony settlers were church members, and therefore able to exercise the civil franchise. The first question was: “Whether the greatest part of the English there (by estimation) be not yet unadmitted to any Congregation among you?” Mather replied that all were admitted to church services, but that many were “not yet” admitted to Communion. He could not certainly say which was the greater number, the partakers or non-partakers of Communion. “But in the Churches in the Bay, where most of us are best acquainted, we may truly say

THE  
VVHOLE  
BOOKE OF PSALMES  
*Faithfully*  
TRANSLATED into ENGLISH  
*Metre.*

Whereunto is prefixed a discourse de-  
claring not only the lawfullnes, but also  
the necessity of the heavenly Ordinance  
of singing Scripture Psalmes in  
the Churches of  
God.

*Coll. 111.*

*Let the word of God dwell plentifully in  
you, in all wisdoms, teaching and exhort-  
ing one another in Psalmes, Hymnes, and  
spirituall Songs, singing to the Lord with  
grace in your hearts.*

*James v.*

*If any be afflicted, let him pray, and if  
any be merry let him sing psalmes.*

*Imprinted*

1640

that for the heads of Families, those that are admitted are farre more in number than the other: besides whom there are likewise sundry children and servants that are admitted also." The determining test was not centered on age, property, or social standing; rather, it was centered on moral rectitude and religious experience. The majority of family-men, on whom support and leadership of both church and commonwealth depended, met the test. And it would be the test Mather advocated throughout his ministry.

His answers to the *Two-and Thirty Questions* give us our best picture of the New England Way as it was shaping up during the first decade of settlement. Furthermore, as Williston Walker pointed out in his *Ten New England Leaders*, Mather's treatise was "an effective contribution to the great debate regarding polity which renewed its strength in England with the opening of the Westminster Assembly."<sup>9</sup>



THE names of John Cotton and Richard Mather are written indelibly, but without benefit of signatures, on the pages of the first book to be compiled and printed in English America in the year 1640. It bears the title, *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre*, but was soon familiarly known as "The Bay Psalm Book." Judging from content and style of writing, John Cotton doubtless wrote the Preface, although for many years it was falsely attributed to Mather's pen.

The earliest extant account we have of the preparation of the Bay Psalm Book appears in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (London, 1702.) The author did not glorify the roles his grandfathers had played in its preparation and publication; in his biographical sketches of them he did not mention their contributions to it. Only when he came to his "Life of Mr. Henry Dunster," who "bore a great part in the metrical version of the Psalms now used in our churches," did Cotton Mather give a brief account of the preparation of the book. He related that about the year 1639, the ministers decided that psalm-singing should be restored to its literary purity, straight from the Hebrew text. "Resolving then upon a new translation, the chief divines of the country took each of them a portion to be translated: among them were Mr. [Thomas] Welde and Mr. [John] Eliot of Roxbury and Mr. [Richard] Mather of Dorchester."



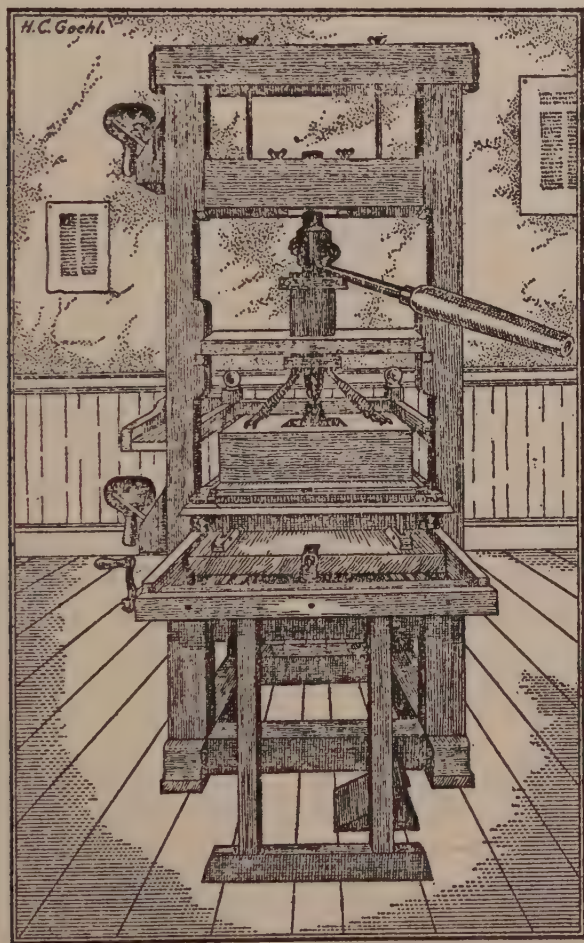
The *Magnalia* then quotes the only contemporaneous reference we have about the writing of the Bay Psalm Book. It is nothing more nor less than a humorous jingle by Thomas Shepard, “the doubting Apostle,” of Cambridge. He addressed his fellow-ministers – Welde, Eliot, and Mather:

You Roxb’ry poets, keep clear of the crime  
Of missing to give us very good rhyme.  
And you of Dorchester, your verses lengthen,  
But with the text’s own words, you will them strengthen.”

That unbalanced quatrain has been no joke to literary critics of the Bay Psalm Book. Some of them have taken Shepard’s jingle more seriously than all the metered Psalms! Moses Coit Tyler, in his *History of American Literature During the Colonial Time*, could not find a single redeeming literary merit in the whole book. But he flatly asserted that “the workmen most conspicuous in the sacred job were Thomas Welde, John Eliot, and Richard Mather. To the last one named was also assigned the duty of writing a preface for the work.”<sup>10</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison in his *Builders of the Bay Colony* declared that “three of the ministers conscientiously set to work to translate the Psalms of David from Hebrew into English verse. And what verse!”<sup>11</sup> Morison went so far as to term the book “the Eliot, Welde, and Mather version.” All, it would seem, because of that jolly jingle by Thomas Shepard, preserved for posterity by Cotton Mather.

Yet, a careful reading of the *Magnalia* shows that Henry Dunster “bore a great part of the metrical version of the Psalms,” and that “the chief divines in the country took each of them a portion to be translated.” Thomas Prince later confirmed that “near thirty pious and learned Ministers” translated the Psalms. How the translators organized and carried out their assignments, and *who* translated *what* Psalm, are matters beyond our knowledge. Yet we may reasonably speculate that the thirty ministers met, talked over the need for a new metered Psalter, agreed to contribute to it, and then elected three of their number to serve as a steering or editorial committee. Since Mather, Welde, and Eliot were not poets, but were regarded as men who “could get things done,” they may have been entrusted with the responsibility of seeing the project through. Others of the thirty had reputations as versifiers – notably, Cotton of Boston, Shepard of Cambridge, Bulkeley of Concord, Ward of Ipswich, and Whiting of Lynn. Doubtless they all contributed their metrical translations to the first book printed in this country.<sup>12</sup> The production of the Bay Psalm Book was a communal project in which the authors and editors preferred to remain anonymous. They gave of their time and talent; yet they sought no personal recognition and received no personal royalties nor honors. They undertook a pioneering work they thought needed to be done, cooperatively but anonymously. No aspect of their epic is more impressive than this.

**T**HE rude press on which the Bay Psalm Book was printed has become almost as famous as the book itself. The first notice of it appears in Winthrop's *Journal*: "1639. 1st month. A printing house was begun in Cambridge by one Daye, at the charge of Mr. Glover, who died on seas hitherward. The first thing that was printed was the freeman's oath; the next was a almanack made for New England by Mr. William Peirce Mariner; the next was the Psalms newly turned into metre." Although the Bay Psalm Book was the third production of the Cambridge Press, it was the first book to be printed, and the only one of the three publications now extant.



A Working Model of the Glover-Daye Press, brought to Cambridge, Mass. in 1639. It was the first press in British North America, and on it was printed the *Bay Psalm Book* in 1640. The book was comprised of 296 pages; 1700 copies were printed and sold for 20 pence each. The few extant copies are now priceless!

The Cambridge Press is, by all odds, the oldest in the United States of America. It began operation, as Winthrop indicated, in 1638. No other press appeared in Massachusetts for nearly forty years. Philadelphia obtained its first press in 1685, and New York in 1693. In the 1684 session of the Virginia House of Burgesses, an act was passed forbidding any person to “use a printing press in Virginia on any occasion whatsoever.” The act was not repealed until 1730, when promptly a press began operation in Williamsburg.

“Mr. Glover who died on sea hitherward” deserves honor as the man who brought the first printing-press to English America. (Spanish America had an earlier one, and in what is now Mexico City, a catechism pamphlet was printed in 1535 by Juan Pablos, an Italian from Brescia.)

Rev. Jose (or Joseph?) Glover was the son of a prosperous merchant and fleet owner, whose ships sailed in the West Indies trade. As a young minister, he married Sarah Owfield, wealthy in her own right. They could have settled for life in Sutton, Surrey – his first and only parish – with more comforts than the average village parson could afford. His Puritan inclinations apparently caused him no trouble with his ecclesiastical superiors, until Archbishop Laud ordered that all clergymen read from their pulpits the “Book of Sports” – a royal declaration that encouraged sports on Sabbath afternoons. Glover, like other Puritan ministers, refused to read the declaration. There is no evidence that he, unlike some of his brethren, was penalized in any way; perhaps his father’s influence at court prevented that. In the meantime his first wife died, and he had remarried – Elizabeth Harris, the daughter of a neighboring minister. They were unhurried in making preparations for their emigration to America. Before leaving England, Glover corresponded with Roger Williams and John Winthrop, and he invested substantially in New England real-estate, including a house in Cambridge.

In mid-summer 1638, Jose Glover with his wife and five children boarded one of his father’s ships, the *John* of London. It was loaded with an ample supply of this world’s goods, which included silver, linen, furniture – even horses and a coach. But the most precious possession was the printing-press, complete with the necessary accessories of type, ink, paper and printer’s tools.

Glover had great plans for his new life in the new world. He was interested in the new college founded two years previously in Cambridge, and he would certainly print books for its library. He was also interested in Christianizing the native Americans; perhaps he could print a Bible in their language. But his far-ranging plans, insofar as his personal involvement was



concerned, came to an end with his death at sea, probably of smallpox. His wife and children continued on and moved into the house he had already bought in Cambridge. His widow later married the Rev. Henry Dunster, Harvard's first president, and she became the first "first lady" of the college. The press was moved and set up in the president's house within "the Yard."

With the foresight for which he was noted, Jose Glover hired and probably trained Stephen Daye and his son, Matthew, to operate the printing-press. He brought both of them with him aboard the *John*. Arriving in Boston harbor without their employer, who was buried at sea, Stephen and Matthew Daye supervised the unloading, transporting, and assembling of the press in a house Elizabeth Glover purchased for them. It was in the Daye home that the Bay Psalm Book was printed.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the wavy lines of the 1640 edition are reminiscent of the Atlantic which lately had borne the press to American shores. The uneven inking, as well as evidence of dried ink between the type, appears throughout the volume. The pressure on certain letters was strong enough to crush the paper. Small wonder then, with these imperfections, that few copies of America's first book were saved. Of the eleven extant copies, five were collected by the Rev. Thomas Prince and stored for many years in the tower of the Old South meeting-house, Boston. The latest auction sale of a Bay Psalm Book in 1947, brought \$151,000, and was purchased by "Friends of Yale." *The New York Times* reported that "an international record for a book auction was believed to have been set." Obviously, the price was not a tribute to the excellence of the printers' art!

Nor was it a tribute of the excellence of the metered Psalms. Some of the translations are not as poetic and singable as those in Henry Ainsworth's *Book of Psalmes*, (Amsterdam, 1612,) sung aboard the *Mayflower* and in the Plymouth church, nor in the Sternhold-Hopkins version of *The Whole Booke of Psalmes*, (London, 1635,) which was included in the King James Prayer Book, and became the official version of the Church of England. The Puritans objected to the Sternhold-Hopkins embellishments and frequent departures from the Biblical text. Following is the Sternhold-Hopkins versification of Psalm 47:1-2:

Ye people all with one accord  
Clap hands and eke rejoyce:  
Be glad and sing unto the Lord  
with sweet and pleasant voyce.  
For high the Lord and dreadfull is,  
With wonders manifold:  
A mighty King he is truly,  
in all the earth erfold.

If therefore the verses are not alwayes  
 so smooth and elegant as some may desire  
 or expect; let them consider that Gods  
 Altar needs not our polishings: **Ex. 20.** for  
 wee have respected rather a plaine transla-  
 tion, then to smooth our verses with the  
 sweetnes of any paraphrase, and soe have  
 attended Conscience rather then Elegance,  
 fidelity rather then poetry, in translating  
 the hebrew words into english language,  
 and Davids poetry into english mettre;  
 that soe wee may sing in Sion the Lords  
 songs of prayle according to his owne  
 will, untill hee take us from hence,  
 and wipe away all our teares, &  
 bid us enter into our masters  
 ioye to sing eternall  
 Halleluiahs.

The celebrated final paragraph of the Preface to "The Bay Psalm Book."

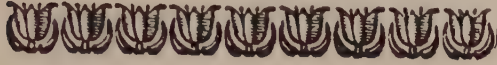
23 *A Psalm of David.*

**T**He Lord to mee a shepherd is,  
 want therefore shall not I.  
 2 Hee in the folds of tender-grasse,  
 doth cause mee downe to lie:  
 To waters calme me gently leads  
 3 Restore my soule doth hee:  
 he doth in paths of righteousness:  
 for his names sake leade mee.  
 4 Yea though in valley of deaths shade  
 I walk, none ill I'le feare:  
 because thou art with mee, thy rod,  
 and staffe my comfort are.  
 5 For mee a table thou hast spread,  
 in presence of my foes:  
 thou dost annoynt my head with oyle,  
 my cup it over-flowes.  
 6 Goodnes & mercy surely shall  
 all my dayes follow mee:  
 and in the Lords house I shall dwell  
 so long as dayes shall bee.

The metered rendition of the 23rd Psalm

The Bay Psalm Book translates the same two verses more simply and accurately:

Clap hands all people, shout for joy  
to God with voyce of singing mirth;  
For high Jehovah fearfull is,  
a great King over all the earth.



John Cotton was right when he wrote in the Preface that “some may desire and expect” the verses to be more “smoothe and elegant.” Or, as Cotton Mather expressed it two generations later: “Afterwards, it was thought that a little more art was to be employed upon them.” Consequently, the Bay Colony ministers appointed Henry Dunster to “revise and refine” the original verses. That he did, with some assistance from Richard Lyon, who lived in the Dunster home. They rewrote a number of the Psalms, changing rhymes more than basic vocabulary. They left the majority of the Psalms, however, essentially the same as in the original edition. The revised volume, with additional versifications of the Canticles, Songs of Moses, Isaiah, etc., was printed by the Cambridge Press in 1651. Its title was *The Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testament, faithfully translated into English Metre*. It soon became known as “The New England Psalm Book,” and was enthusiastically adopted by the Congregational and other churches of America. It was used for about a century, and went through some twenty-five American editions. It was popular among the Congregationalists in England, where seventeen editions were printed, and among the Presbyterians of Scotland, who sang from nine successive editions.

The old Bay Psalm Book has had quite a history! Richard Mather probably smiled when he read Shepard’s kindly injunction: “And you of Dorchester, your verses lengthen . . .” He would have smiled still more to have seen the lengthened editions into which the book went for more than a century, and the near priceless value now placed on its first edition.

THE discussions and preparations prior to the founding of Harvard College are as heavily veiled as those preceding the publication of the Bay Psalm Book. The paucity of records is amazing, especially among a literate people who chronicled lesser actions and events with meticulous





A Conjectural Restoration of the "Old College"  
(1638-1679) at Harvard

detail. Yet the purpose which inspired the establishment of the college was expressed in the anonymous pamphlet, *New England's First Fruits* (1643,) which was widely circulated in England to raise funds for the infant college. The stated purpose was "to advance *Learning* and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the dust."

Two of the living and active ministers best qualified to advance learning were John Cotton, a former dean of Emmanuel College, and Richard Mather, once a humane schoolmaster and now father of five prospective scholars. Yet there is no record of their promotional activity in behalf of a college prior to 1636. The Act of Foundation was passed by the General Court at the end of crowded docket on 25 October 1636: "The Court agreed to give 400 £ toward a schoale or colledge, whereof 200 £ to be paid the next yeare, and 200 £ when the work is finished, and the next Court to appoint wheare and what building." (*Mass. Bay Records*, I, 183.) There is no fuller record to indicate who made the motion, or what discussion, if any, followed such a costly proposal for a young, struggling colony. Apparently the educational project had been well discussed by both magistrates and ministers prior to the Act of Foundation.

John Harvard, who had studied at Emmanuel College for the ministry, did not arrive in Massachusetts until 1637. Few facts are known about his life, in spite of the most diligent research. It is known that he was born in 1608; that he took his M.A. from Emmanuel in 1635; that on 19 April 1636 he married Ann Sadler, the daughter of a Sussex vicar. They sailed from England during the summer of 1637, and arrived at Charlestown, where they were admitted as "inhabitants" on August first. Harvard had a very brief ministry as an associate of Zechariah Symmes in the Charlestown church. On 14 September 1638, at the age of thirty, John Harvard died "at Charlestown, of a Consumption," as Cotton Mather later noted in the *Magnalia*. Shortly before his death, "it pleased God to stir up the heart of one Mr. *Harvard* (a godly Gentleman and lover of Learning, there living amongst us) to give one half of his Estate (it being in all about 1700£ ) toward the erecting of a Colledge, and all his Library."

On March 13 following his death and benefaction, the General Court meeting in Boston: "Ordered, that the colledge agreed upon formerly to be built at Cambridg shalbee called Harvard Colledge."

Again, there is no record of discussion prior to the order, although there was probably unanimity of sentiment among magistrates and ministers that the college, still awaiting its first building, should be named in honor of the generous young minister who in death "laid the most significant *Stone* in the Foundation."<sup>15</sup>

The first Board of Overseers, then the only governing board of the college, was appointed in 1642. It was comprised of Governor Winthrop, Deputy-Governor Endecott, President Dunster, nine magistrates and nine ministers. The ministers included Thomas Shepard of Cambridge, George Phillips and John Knowles of Watertown, Zechariah Symmes and Thomas Allen of Charlestown, John Wilson and John Cotton of Boston, John Eliot of Roxbury, and Richard Mather of Dorchester.<sup>16</sup>

**A**NOTHER matter of mutual concern to the New England churches during the 1640s was a formulation and codification of their basic beliefs and practices. Each local church had its own Covenant by which "wee do bynd our selves" in faith and practice. The Covenant was the core-document of the parish church to which every member pledged allegiance. But the churches were also bound together by mutual faith and interests. Both ministers and lay leaders recognized the need for a constitution which for the growing colonies would define the nature of the church and outline its polity.

Action was initiated when several ministers urged the General Court at its May session in 1646 to summon an inter-colonial meeting for that purpose, which it did. A synod composed of elders (ministers) and messengers (laymen) assembled in Cambridge on 1 September 1646. Although representatives of all four Puritan colonies were invited, few came from the twenty-two churches of Plymouth, Hartford and New Haven. Of the twenty-nine Bay churches, however, twenty-eight were represented. The deliberations of this session lasted for two weeks, and were "round-table" in nature. The most important action was the appointment of a committee of three – John Cotton, Richard Mather, and Ralph Partridge – to prepare, individually or collectively, a "model of church government" which would be discussed at the next session.

The Cambridge Synod reconvened the following June, but its sessions were cut short by an epidemic which took many lives, including those of the Rev. Thomas Hooker, founder of Hartford, and Margaret Winthrop, wife of the Massachusetts Bay governor.

# PLATFORM OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

GATHERED OUT OF THE WORD OF GOD:  
AND AGREE'D UPON BY THE ELDERS:  
AND MESSENGERS OF THE CHURCHES  
ASSEMBLED IN THE SYNOD AT CAMBRIDGE  
IN NEW ENGLAND

To be presented to the Churches and Generall Court  
for their consideration and acceptance,  
in the Lord.

The Eight Moneth Anno 1649

- 
- Pfal: 84. 1. *How amiable are thy Tabernacles O Lord of Hosts?*  
Pfal: 26. 8. *Lord I have loved the habitation of thy house & the  
place where thine honour dwellerh.*  
Pfal: 27. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek  
after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the  
dayes of my life to behold the Beauty of the Lord & to  
inquire in his Temple.*
- 

Printed by S G at Cambridge in New England  
and are to be sold at Cambridge and Boston  
Anno Dom: 1649.



The third and final session convened in Cambridge on 15 August 1648. During the opening sermon, a snake wiggled across the rostrum behind the preacher. But another elder stamped the reptile to death. Winthrop, relating the incident in his *Journal*, found considerable symbolism and divine portent in it: "The serpent is the devil; the synod, the representatives of the churches of Christ in New England. The devil had formerly and lately attempted their disturbance and dissolution; but their faith in the seed of the woman overcame him and crushed his head."

Perhaps this symbolic incident spurred the delegates to swift, harmonious work. Within less than a fortnight they formulated their polity and faith into a constitution, and gave the churches a standard of procedure and practice which would, with only minor revisions, be followed for more than a century. They also approved "for the substance thereof" the statement of faith recently adopted by the Westminster Assembly in London, a creed to which Parliament gave its prompt stamp of approval. This diplomatic, even ecumenical action by the Cambridge Synod silenced the charges of heterodoxy, which had been raised in the Westminster Assembly against the New England churches. It also forestalled any interference by Parliament into their affairs, which previously they had feared.

*A Platform of CHURCH DISCIPLINE Gathered out of the Word of God*, (its official title,) was printed in 1649 on the primitive press which had produced the Bay Psalm Book nine years previously. It was the first display of printing by Samuel Green of Cambridge, and his typographic art was no more refined than that of Stephen Daye. About five hundred copies of the *Platform* were printed, of which only nine are now extant. The last sale of a copy – and the last to be privately owned – was made during the depression year of 1938, for a bargain price of \$11,500. The copy was acquired by the Clements Library, University of Michigan.

The final, authorized draft of the Cambridge Platform was based on the one submitted by Richard Mather, although it was modified slightly and reduced in length by the Synod. The Preface was written by John Cotton – no doubt about *this* Preface! Manuscript copies of both the original, longer draft and the final adopted Platform, written in Mather's hand, are among the historical treasures of the American Antiquarian Society. In this space we cannot give a detailed review or summary of the Platform, which in its first edition comprised forty-four pages and was divided into seventeen chapters. But we can catch some of its essential doctrine and spirit from a few key-passages:

"The Catholick Church is the whole company of those that are elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the state of sin and death unto

a state of Grace, & salvation in Jesus Christ." Regarding a particular church in a particular community, the definition is narrowed and more explicit: "A Congregational church is by the institution of Christ a part of the Militant-visible-church, consisting of a company of Saints by calling, united unto one body by a holy covenant for the publick worship of God & the mutuall edification of one another, in the Fellowship of the Lord Jesus."

Chapter 14 on "Excommunication and other censures" should be required reading for modern critics who are inclined to make a blanket indictment against Puritan severity. "Censures are justified as appointed by Christ for the preventing, removing and healing of offenses in the Church." (I Timothy 5:20 and Romans 2:24.) Offenses which involve only one person against another in dispute or minor misdeameanor should be dealt with quietly and privately. "But if the offense be more publick at first & of a more *heinous & criminall nature* . . . then the church without such graduall proceeding is to cast out the offender from their holy communion."

Then appears this qualifying and significant passage: "In dealing with the offender, great care is to be taken that wee be neither overstrict or rigorous, nor too indulgent or remiss; our proceeding herein ought to be with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest wee also be tempted; & that the best of us have need of much forgiveness from the Lord. Yet the winning and healing of the offenders soul, being the end of these endeavors, wee must not daub with untempered morter, nor heal the wounds of our brethren slightly." Later in the chapter it is made clear that "excommunication being a spiritual punishment, it doth not prejudice the excommunicate in, nor deprive him of his *civil rights* . . . And because we are not without hope of his recovery, wee are not to account him as an enemy but to admonish him as a brother."

Of general interest to all people who are concerned with church-state relations is the final chapter: "Of the Civil Magistrate's Power in Matters Ecclesiastical." The chapter begins by asserting that "It is lawfull, profitable, & necessary for christians to gather themselves into a Church estate," whether or not they have the approval of the political powers-that-be. Nevertheless, "Church government stands in no opposition to civil governments of common-welths."

There are checks and balances: "The power and authority of Magistrates is not for the restraining of churches, or any other good workes . . . [or] to compell their subjects to become church members, & to partake at the Lords's table . . . As it is unlawful for church-officers to meddle with the sword of the Magistrate, so it is unlawfull for the Magistrate to meddle with the work proper to church officers."

Although there was considerable interaction between church and state in the Puritan Commonwealth, its ministerial leaders drew lines of separation in the Cambridge Platform a full seven score years before the Federal Constitution did the same. While they did not believe that citizenship should be divorced from moral and religious standards, they firmly believed in separating the offices of church and state, and in providing guarantees from both in behalf of personal liberty and the commonweal.

Among the documents of early American history, the Cambridge Platform of 1648 has seldom been given its rightful due. But at least a few historians have acknowledged its greatness. At the time of its 300th anniversary, Henry Wilder Foote declared that it was "the seedbed from which those doctrines sprouted" that later flowered in the American Revolution. Williston Walker called it "the most important monument of early New England Congregationalism, because it is the clearest reflection of the system as it lay in the minds of the first generation on our soil after nearly twenty years of practical experience."<sup>17</sup> The fact that the Cambridge Platform was reprinted in at least twenty-nine editions throughout the next two centuries – in Cambridge, London, Boston, Hartford, and Portland – attests to its wide interest and continuing influence.

**W**ITHOUT knowing it at the time, for only history could render the verdict, Richard Mather reached the height of his prestige and authority at the Cambridge synod, 1646-48. All else in his next score of years seems anti-climactic to us, although perhaps not to him. He continued to preach and lecture in the Dorchester church. He bound together "The Summe of Seventie Lectures, (1646-50,) which were never published, but still may be read in holograph manuscript at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester. A slender volume, *Summe of Certain Sermons*, with an introduction by J. Cotton and J. Wilson, was printed on the Cambridge Press by Samuel Green in 1652.

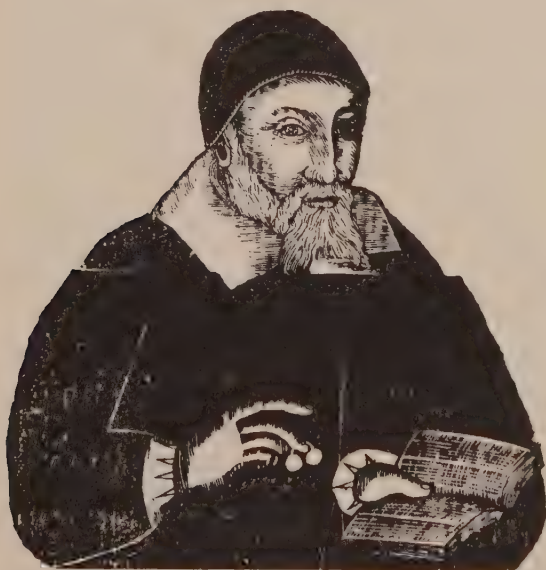
It is known that he preached three Massachusetts Election Sermons in 1644, 1660, and 1664, but no copies of them are known. His extant sermons and lectures exhibit a *plain* manner of writing, perhaps derived as much from his experience as a schoolmaster as from his Puritan convictions. His youngest son, Increase, who had heard him preach many times, said that he aimed "to shoot his Arrows not over peoples heads, but into their Hearts and Consciences . . . He studiously avoided obscure phrases, exotick Words or an unnecessary citation of Latin Sentences, which some men addict themselves to the use of."<sup>18</sup> Richard's grandson, Cotton, would become a prime offender!



In an age when religious controversy, both in Europe and the American colonies, spewed forth the most vituperative epithets, Richard Mather was unusually courteous in debate. While engaging “Mr. Samuel Rutherford, a godly and learned Brother of the Church of Scotland,” in a trans-Atlantic exchange of pamphlets over “the due right of Presbeters,” Mather said in his *Reply to Mr. Rutherford*, (London, 1647,) “As for bitterness of spirit and tartnesse of contests, I have never thought *that* to be Gods way of promoting truth amongst brethren . . . For those who must live together in the heavens, I know not why they should not love one another on earth, whatever differences or apprehensions may for the present be found amongst them in some things.”

Increase thought his father’s courtesy in debate was rooted in his humility, for “he was exceeding low and little in his own eyes. Some have thought that his greatest error was that he did not magnifie his office, as he might and sometimes should have done.”

Perhaps because he did not “magnifie” his office nor himself, he was elected moderator of several synods. Indeed, while he was presiding over a Bay Colony synod, he was attacked by “the Stone,” which afflicted many oldsters of his day. Cotton Mather reported in the *Magnalia* that his grandfather’s death was occasioned by “a total stoppage of urine,” and then to give a poetic touch to the tragedy, he quoted from Ecclesiastes: “The wheel was broken at the cistern.”



Wood engraving by John Foster, c.1669, earliest known portrait engraving in colonial America.

On 22 April 1669, Richard Mather died at the age of seventy-three, having been a religious leader of the colony for nearly half his lifespan. Many eulogies were delivered and epitaphs written, including a perceptive one recorded in the *Magnalia*: “Here sleeps Richard Mather, whose fortune it was to have children equal to their sire. It is questionable in which he was superior – learning or virtue. His genius and his fame cannot be buried.”

Eminent as his pioneering achievements were in blazing the New England Way, his greatest legacy was doubtless his family of six sons. Four of them became ministers; "little Joseph," mentioned in the seafaring *Journal*, died in youth, and "Timothy the farmer" provided food for the family on the Dorchester farm.

Samuel, his eldest son, graduated in Harvard's second class in 1643. He became the first teaching Fellow of the college in 1650. He also had the distinction of being the first minister of the Old North (Second) Church in Boston. After 1655, he spent most of his career in Ireland, first as senior fellow of Trinity college and later as pastor of a church in Dublin. His major printed works include: *Figures or Types of the Old Testament*, (1683, and five later London editions) and *Irenicum: or an Essay for Union* (of Congregationalists and Presbyterians, London, 1680.)

Nathaniel, third son of Richard Mather, sailed for England shortly after he graduated in the Harvard class of 1647. He was given a parish through Cromwell's influence in Barnstable, where he remained until he was ejected by the Bartholomew Act of 1662. He, like other Puritans before him, emigrated to Rotterdam, where he ministered to an English congregation. Upon the death of his brother, Samuel, in Dublin in 1671, he was called to the pastorate there, which he accepted. It was brief, however, for he spent his last years in London preaching and lecturing. His principal work, *Twenty-Three Select Sermons*, devoted to Cases of Conscience, was published posthumously in 1701. He died on 26 July 1697, and was buried in Bunnhill Fields, near two other Puritan notables, John Bunyan and Isaac Watts.

Eleazar, the fifth son and the first to be born in America two years after his parents' settlement, graduated in the Harvard class of 1656, along with his younger brother, Increase. Eleazar began to preach at the age of nineteen, but unlike his older brothers who chose the cities of the old world, he chose to settle in a pioneer village on the western frontier. He gathered a church in Northampton, Massachusetts, and was ordained its minister in 1658. There he preached for eleven years, until he died in 1669, the year of his father's death. Nathaniel's widow married his successor, the eminent Samuel Stoddard, and in time they became the grandparents of the even more eminent Jonathan Edwards.

Increase, the youngest, was destined to become the leading colonial minister and college president of his generation. His influential but stormy career will be told in the following chapter.



THE Last Will and Testament of Richard Mather, written eight years before his death in sturdy, steady hand, may still be read in the Suffolk County Probate Office, (vol. VI) in Boston. It has been printed several times,<sup>19</sup> in whole and in part, for it not only delineates his own character, but also the faith and ethic of the first generation New Englanders. The Testament, with which the document begins, is nearly as long as the Will which disposes of his worldly goods. He acknowledges "the rich and wonderfull Grace and Mercy of Almighty God , who hath vouchsafed to put mee an unworthy creature into the Ministry of the Gospel of his Son." Concerning death, which presents no fears, "I should be glad to bee removed hence . . . In the meane time I desire to stay the Lord's leasure."

His first itemized bequest is to "my deare wife, Sarah (Cotton) Mather. I received of her in Household Stuffe the vallue of Fifty pounds and Engaged my selfe to leave to her at my decease the dubble thereof. It is now my mind and will that the said Engagement bee truly performed and fulfilled."

He then made a series of small bequests to members of his family, including twenty shillings to his step-daughter, Mary (or Maria) Cotton, who would later marry his son, Increase.

His books and manuscripts, "whether in my Desk or without it, in my Study or Else where," were willed to his four ministerial sons; although in accord with English tradition, his eldest son, Samuel, was to receive twice the number of any younger son.

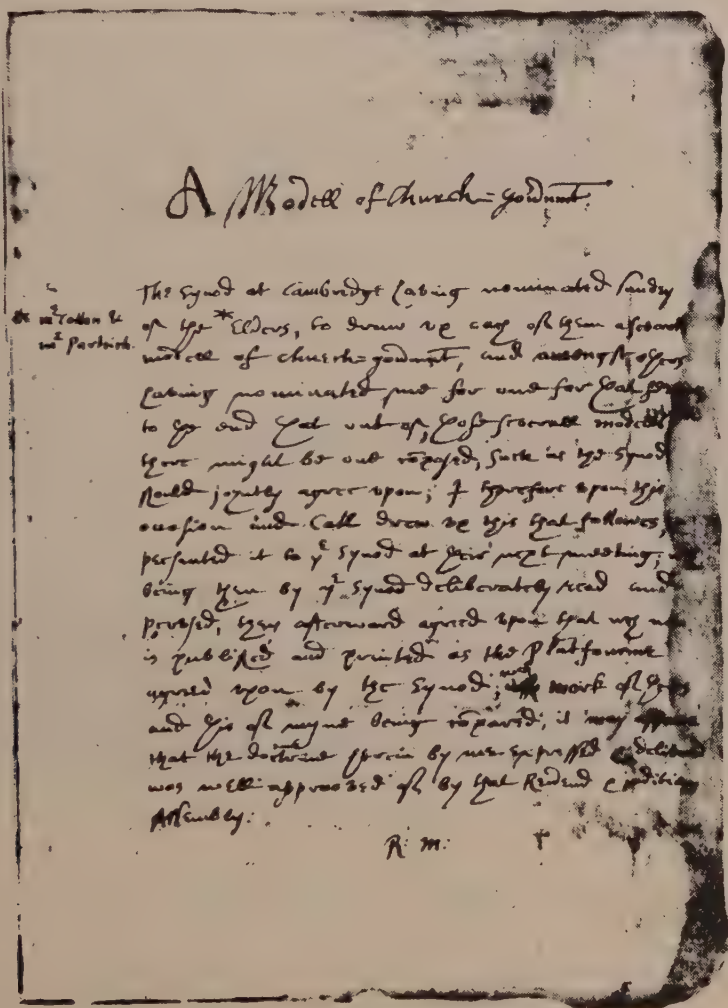
Then came the surprise of the Will: "Concerning my sonne Timothy . . . I give to him, the said Timothy, all my House, barne, buildings and Lands in Dorchester, whatsoever and wheresoever the same bee, whether in home Lotts, or in the neck of Land or in the great Lotts, or in the Commons, or Cowe walk, or wheresoever . . . I do hereby give to him, the said Timothy Mather, all the rest and remainder of my Estate in Movable Goods whatsoever, whether it bee Servants, debts owing unto mee, brass, pewter, Table stooles, bedding, linnens or other household stuffe, or Cattle, Oxen, Horses, Mares, or whatever . . ."

Timothy was given the lion's share of the real estate, but there was no audible protest from the other brothers. (Samuel, Nathaniel, and Increase were in England when the Will was written.) Richard Mather justified his distribution by declaring: "I doe it only conceiving that the cost and charges I have bestowed on them in their Education, together with what I now hereby give them [in books and manuscripts] may as well, if not better, Enable and fitt them, through the blessing of God, to a Comfortable way of subsisting and serving the Lord, as if they had had greater Portions left them at my decease and had had their Education in some other way, that had been less chargeable and Costly."



There was another consideration not mentioned in the Will. Timothy was the son who remained at home and assisted his mother, Katharine, who was described (by Increase) as "a Woman of singular prudence for the Management of Affairs." Assisted by Timothy, "she removed from her Husband all secular Cares, so that he wholly devoted himself to his study, and to Sacred Employments."

Through strict Puritan justice, Timothy Mather received the ancestral acres he had farmed for the benefit of his father's family. For, to paraphrase Robert Frost, Timothy "was the land's before the land was his." He continued his stewardship over land and family. In later generations his progeny would exceed in numbers, as well as fame, those of his better educated and more renowned brothers.



Title page of *The Cambridge Platform* in Richard Mather's hand.



*Courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society*

INCREASE MATHER: Oil painting by Jan Van der Spriet (London, 1688)



# INCREASE MATHER

(1639-1723)



BECAUSE of his wide-ranging public service as a minister, author, Charter agent for the Bay colony, and president of Harvard College, Increase Mather was destined to become the most renowned New Englander of his generation. Within the first decade of the Massachusetts Bay settlement, he was born on June 21, 1639. His father christened him with an odd name to express a commonly-shared hope—namely, “the never-to-be forgotten Increase of every sort wherewith God favored the country.”<sup>1</sup>

We have more information about his childhood and youth than of most children of the first generation of English-born in America. In those pre-Freudian days, few childhood recollections were preserved. Like the measles, childhood was an affliction to endure, and recover from as quickly as possible.

In his manuscript “Autobiography,” (which was not printed until nearly two and a half centuries had passed,<sup>2</sup>) he wrote: “I lived in my father’s family twelve years. I learned to read of my mother. I learned to write of my father, who also instructed me in Grammar learning, both in the Latin and Greek tongues. But when there was an able scholar in Dorchester, I was sent to him.”

His mother favored him, not only because he was the youngest of six boys, but because of his “weakly constitution.” Cotton Mather recalled in *Parentator* that “she desired of the glorious God only two things on his behalf; the one was, the Grace to fear and love God; the other was the Learning that might accomplish to do service for God . . . Child, said she, if God make thee a good Christian and a good Scholar, thou hast all that thy Mother asked of thee.”<sup>3</sup>

Increase acquired more than English grammar, Latin and Greek from his father. Richard Mather was no autocrat of the dining-table; he encouraged his sons to discuss with him the issues of the day at meal-time.



Increase was eight years of age in 1647, when the General Court of Massachusetts, having the encouragement of his father and other ministers, established a system of grammar schools, the first in the American colonies. He was nine years old when his father returned from the final session of the Cambridge Synod, with news that *his* draft of the "Platform" had been adopted. The impressionable lad was learning lessons in education and churchmanship which later he would put to use in his own right.

Conversation about the Mother Country was not lacking in the Mather household. By the time Increase was ten years of age, two of his older brothers were living abroad. Doubtless their letters told of the exciting events in London: the reformation of church and state being effected by a Puritan parliament, the imprisonment of Archbishop Laud, and the beheading of Charles I on January 30, 1649. Perhaps they even quoted the king's last speech from the scaffold, which was the subject of endless discussion in both Englands. "I must tell you," he said with his dying breath, "that liberty and freedom of the people consists in having government . . . It is not their having a share in the government; that is nothing appertaining to them. A subject and a sovereign are clean different things."<sup>4</sup>

Thankful as the New England Puritans were for the end of Charles' despotic reign, the immediate results worked an economic hardship. The Great Migration, which had brought about eight thousand English settlers to Massachusetts during the 1630s, was slowing down – at least for the first decade or so of Increase's childhood. The Puritan reformation under Cromwell, as Winthrop expressed it in his *Journal*, "caused all men to stay in England in expectation of a new world, so as few coming to us, all foreign commodities grew scarce, and our own of no price."

Difficult as this economic transition was for the colonists, it tended to strengthen their feeling of isolation and independence from England, as well as the ties of unity within the newly-formed New England Confederation of the four colonies. Yankee business enterprise and inter-colonial government developed, not so much by choice as by necessity.

Increase was admitted to Harvard College in the autumn of 1651, along with his brother, Eleazer, who was two years his senior. The older brother endured the rigors of college life better than Increase, who recalled in his *Autobiography*: "After I had lived in the College about half a year, my parents being tender of me, and fearing that the college diet would not well agree with my weak natural constitution of body, they sent me to Ipswich, Anno 1652." He became a student of the Rev. John Norton, who several years earlier had helped his father resolve some emotional and religious difficulties. The young scholar could not be in friendlier, more trusted hands.

It may be assumed that he continued the regular first year Harvard course which included "Logic, Physics, and Greek Etymological Syntax." For the course in "Divinity Cathedrical", Norton probably drilled his students in his own systematic theology, which he published in London in 1657 under the title, *The Orthodox Evangelist*. (John Cotton wrote an introductory "To the Reader", which he signed on September 20, 1652, a few weeks before he died.)

Norton had a more engaging manner of writing, and probably of teaching, than most theologians of his day. For example, the first chapter of his book, "Of the Divine Essence", begins as follows: "Though nothing is more manifestly known than that God is; yet nothing is more difficultly known than *what* God is. Philosophy is here dumb, or worse. Simonides being asked what God was, asketh a days time to answer the question. At that days end he asketh two, at the end of these two he asketh four; and so often doubling the time, being asked the reason thereof, Because (saith he) the longer I study, the difficulter I find the question."<sup>5</sup>

Though the ways of philosophy are long and labyrinthine, God "hath revealed himself in his Word and Works . . . It hath pleased God to give unto himself many Names and Attributes, by the help of which we may the better conceive thereof." Norton then listed ten Hebrew and two Greek names by which God is designated in the Bible, and he gave a concise, discriminating definition of each term. By the time the first lesson was mastered, the student was well launched on the depths of systematic theology.

When John Norton was called to the ministry of the First Church in Boston, to succeed the late John Cotton in 1653, Increase went with him, and continued his studies.

During his fifteenth year, he was visited by two misfortunes: an attack of what was diagnosed as kidney stones, and the death of his beloved mother. Shortly thereafter he underwent "a conspicuous change". For about three months he was "in extremity of anguish and horror", and "everyone observed that I was strangely changed." Conversion was effected when "I went into a little garret of Mr. Norton's study, and shut the door. And all the family being abroad, I poured out my soul in complaints before God that day. I prayed to God that he would show me mercy. At the close of the day, as I was praying, I gave myself up to Jesus Christ, declaring that I was now resolved to be his servant, I his only, and his forever."<sup>6</sup>

Anyone inclined to scorn such a born-again experience, may well ponder the results, which were three-fold: 1. "From this time I became very studious, which before I had not been." 2. "I had ease and inward peace in my perplexed soul immediately, and from that day I walked





comfortably for a considerable time.” And 3. Having been prompted by the dying request of his mother, he resolved to accept the call of the ministry.

During his third year as a Harvard student, there was a change of presidents. The Rev. Henry Dunster, who had fallen into “the snares of Anabaptism”, resigned in October, 1654. The fifteen-year old Increase was duly impressed that his father and his tutor were chosen to notify the Rev. Charles Chauncy of his election to the Harvard presidency.

For some reason, unknown to the author of *Parentator* and unmentioned in the *Autobiography*, Increase Mather’s class was “detained a good part of a year or longer than of right they should have been.” Presumably, one of President Chauncy’s first acts was to lengthen the course of study, without exempting the then-senior class. The dissatisfaction was so intense that at least seventeen students withdrew from the college. Characteristically, Richard Mather insisted that both his sons finish the course. Eleazar and Increase, with six other graduates, comprised the class of 1656.

The extra year’s study was of particular value to Increase, for he came under the tutorship of Jonathan Mitchel. As a youth, Mitchel had shared the twelve-week voyage on the *James* with Richard Mather, and had been a family friend ever since. As a minister in Cambridge and a fellow of Harvard College, he was noted for his scholarship in the pulpit as well as the classroom. His learning was all the more contagious because of his humble manner and affable personality, to which Increase Mather would pay life-long tribute. Nor did he ever forget that his tutor came to his rescue in a moment of desperate need.

While Increase was delivering his graduation thesis and espousing the doctrines of Peter Ramus, the controversial French philosopher and educational reformer, “the President, who was a vehement *Aristotelian*, upon a dislike of the Principles of Ramus, which Mr. Mather had imbibed, would have stopped him whilst carrying on his Thesis, but Mr. Mitchel publicly interposed.” (So wrote Samuel Mather years later in the *Memoirs* of his father’s life.) The scene was one of triumph for the youthful disputant, but one of humiliation for the newly-installed president. The die was cast as Increase made his first public appearance. He would continue to proclaim his convictions and espouse his causes, however controversial or unpopular. In the process he would imperil friendships and lose the support he needed to carry many of them to fruition.

No sooner had he graduated than his father arranged his pulpit debut. Increase preached his first sermon on his eighteenth birthday at a village within the town of Dorchester, which then covered a far more extensive

territory than now. We have no record of the occasion, except the text from which he preached: "Enoch walked with God". (Genesis 5.24). Having tried his homiletical wings in a neighboring village, Increase preached the following Sunday in his father's Dorchester pulpit. "The whole Auditory", rhapsodized the author of *Parentator*, "were greatly affected by the Light and the Flame, in which the rare youth appeared unto them: Especially was his Father so."

Richard Mather, rounding out three score years, and ministering to a large parish, could well have used his youngest son as an assistant. It was not to be, however, as he had hoped. His eldest son, Samuel, wrote him from Dublin, and urged him to send Increase there for further study. Richard had no intention of granting the request, but, as Increase recalled, "I prevailed with my father that I should go . . . We parted, not expecting to see one another in this world."

**O**N July 3, 1657, Increase set sail for England, and had a speedy, uneventful voyage of only five weeks. He spent a month or so visiting his father's old friends in Lancashire, and then proceeded on to Dublin, where he was welcomed with fraternal care and affection.

Samuel was a fellow of Trinity College, a stronghold of puritanism in Ireland. He had no difficulty enrolling his brother in a graduate course there. Increase lost time from his studies by attacks of both measles and smallpox, but he received his Master of Arts degree in June 1658, three weeks after his nineteenth birthday. Although he, along with only one other graduate, refused to wear the cap and hood, the provost overlooked that breach of academic custom. He offered him a fellowship in Trinity College, but Increase declined the honor. "The moist Irish air" did not agree with him. He resolved to go to England, hoping for a more agreeable climate.

Increase soon accepted an invitation to become a chaplain to the English garrison in the Isle of Guernsey, where he went in April, 1659. He preached Sunday mornings at the castle there, and in the afternoons at the town of Petersport, where a number of French people comprised his congregation.

A few months after assuming his duties on that Channel Island, he was urged to accept a call to "a gathered church" in Sandwich, Devonshire, which his brother Nathaniel had been organizing. He declined, however, in order to accept a position at St. Mary's Church in Gloucester, where among other duties he preached Sunday afternoons "at the College Cathedral". He confided in his own handwriting more than fifty years later: "I was willing to have settled there, but I saw a change of times at the door."

That change of times was soon apparent to him as he returned for another brief chaplaincy at the Guernsey garrison. He had been there but a few weeks when “King Charles II came in; and what came in with him every Body knows.”<sup>7</sup>

Chaplain Mather did not endear himself to the soldiers and many of the Guernsey civilians by refusing to drink to the king’s health. Some of the “too much temporizing clergy” said that “I would pray for the King’s health, but drink for my own.” He felt that his conscientious stand was vindicated, for “the king emitted a proclamation against debauched high drinkers, which has proved very advantageous here.”<sup>8</sup>

He was soon in deeper trouble. On the arrival of a new governor of Guernsey, Sir Hugh Pollard, it was announced that the chaplain must conform to the Church of England ceremonies. Again, with a sensitive and stubborn conscience, he had no choice but to resign. “Thus”, he wrote, “was I persecuted out of two places, Gloucester and Guernsey, before I was 22 years of age.”

He left Guernsey on March 1, 1660, and spent the next four months “preaching in many places” in the vicinity of Weymouth and Dorchester. His friends in Dorsetshire offered him a living of some four hundred pounds annually – a tempting offer indeed, considering that his father was being paid less than a quarter of that salary in New England. But there were ecclesiastical strings attached to the Dorsetshire offer – “if he would *conform*. This he could not; he durst not.”<sup>9</sup>

While waiting for a homeward-bound ship, he browsed through the bookshops of London. He spent every available shilling on a wide selection of the classics, secular as well as sacred. Like his father, he regarded a well-chosen library as the Lord’s tool and weapon against the wilderness of human ignorance and sin. He would be as well equipped as possible with those literary assets when he settled in his first New England parish.<sup>10</sup>

He sailed from Weymouth on June 29, 1661, on a vessel bound for Newfoundland. Arriving there safely, he considered himself fortunate that he was delayed only ten days on that northern island. Boarding another ship for Boston, he arrived home on September first.

It was a Saturday evening when he came unannounced to his father’s home in Dorchester. Not only did he weep “abundantly for joy” at the sight of his father, but he had the added pleasure of greeting his brother Eleazar, who had returned for a visit from his new frontier parish in Northampton. The next day in church, “the comforted old patriarch sat, shining like the sun in Gemini, hearing his two sons in his own pulpit.”<sup>11</sup>



Wonderful as it was to be home with his father, Increase admitted that he felt like a stranger in the land of his birth. He had learned to love England, and he left it only "by submission to the will of God." He would return!

Dorchester and Boston had changed during his four-year absence, and the tide of immigration was again swelling as a result of the restoration of the Stuart monarchy. While we have no record of Increase's impressions, we do have a contemporaneous account from John Josselyn, reporting on his second voyage of 1663. He described Dorchester as "filled somewhat thick with houses to the number of two hundred and more, beautiful with fair Orchards and Gardens . . . counted the greatest Town heretofore in *New England*, but now gives way to *Boston*, it hath a Harbour to the North for Ships". In describing Boston, Josselyn said that the principal part of the town was built on "a high mountain that out-tops all, with its three little rising hills on the summit, called *Tramount*; this is furnished with a Beacon and great Guns." He found "many fair shops, their materials are Brick, Stone, Lime; Townhouse built upon pillars where the Merchants may confer . . . Their streets are many and wide, paved with pebble stone, and the Southside adorned with Gardens and Orchards. The Town is rich and very populous, much frequented by strangers, here is the dwelling of their Governour."<sup>12</sup> (Quite a different Boston from the one Josselyn saw on his first voyage in 1638, when it was "rather a Village than a Town, there not being above Twenty or thirty houses.")

What made Increase Mather feel like a stranger on his return was not so much a change in his native setting as a change within himself. He had left a youth; he came back a man. His outlook had been broadened by foreign study and travel; his character had been tempered by disillusioning experience. He was ready to begin his career.

It soon became known throughout the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies that Richard Mather's youngest son was home again, brimming with zeal and learning, and available for a pastorate. Within a few weeks he had "overtures of settlement" from several churches, including those in Barnstable, Boston, Dorchester, Guilford, Plymouth, and Windsor. He states in his *Autobiography* that he had "offers from no less than twelve places."

Before accepting any of them, he felt it advisable to change his single condition. He tells us of no previous love interest, whether during his Harvard undergraduate years or those following in Ireland and England. He had not seen much of his step-sister, Maria, after his father had married the widow of John Cotton. When Increase returned home, he saw in Maria "a gentlewoman of much goodness in her temper." They were married on March 6, 1662.

INCREASE Mather accepted the call of the North Church in Boston. It had been gathered in 1650, and so became the Second Church. John Cotton favored its organization, even though the inevitable result was the transfer of several members from the old First. Increase's eldest brother, Samuel, preached the first sermon in the North Church. (It would be not only "the Mather Church" for a century of successive pastorates, but it was and is the original "Old North." Christ Church, which is now often designated as "the Old North" was not built until 1723, although the Episcopal Society was formed the previous year. There is still dispute as to which church tower flashed the lanterns for Paul Revere. In an extant account he wrote in 1798, he said that they flashed from "the North Church steeple." Since Christ Church was known by no other name in 1775, and the Second Church had long been designated as "the North", it is highly probable that the lantern episode was enacted in the steeple of the latter church. At any rate, in many publications Increase and Cotton Mather designated themselves as pastors of the North Church in Boston when it was the only North Church. The term will so be used in this volume.)

Increase Mather settled with his bride in the Cotton homestead, where she herself had been born, and where she gave birth to four of their children. The young minister hesitated to accept a settled pastorate in the North Church, so long as he entertained the hope of returning to England, "if liberty for non-conformity should there be granted". The hope dimmed as the months passed. After a lengthy period of procrastination, he was ordained on May 27, 1664. At the ordination ceremonies his father gave him the official charge. So began his sixty-year ministry in the North Church, with which "the Mather dynasty" would long be identified.

The first decade of Increase's ministry was far from happy. Troubles, temptations, and illnesses periodically plagued him. "Soon after my ordination," he confesses in his *Autobiography*, "I was grievously molested with temptations to athiesm." He does not say what motivated these temptations, for they appear strange in a man so well trained and tempered in the Christian faith. He adds, however, that "I had experience of great answers to prayers, whereby I could but see that there is a God." Apparently atheism never tempted him to the extent that he stopped praying.

The year 1669 brought grief to him and his family. His father died in April. About three months later his brother, Eleazar, died at the age of thirty-two, thus ending a promising ministry at Northampton. At the request of his widow, Increase journeyed to the frontier town to assist in settling his brother's affairs. While there he was "stricken with a violent fever and brought near the gates of death." He was not able to return to his Boston pulpit until the following March.



THE ORIGINAL NORTH CHURCH, BOSTON.

Built in 1650; burned in November 1676. The fire consumed 46 houses, several stores and warehouses. The blaze started, according to the generally accepted theory, when a "Taylour Boy" fell asleep near a lighted candle, which fell into a pile of clothing.



More illness, which he termed “the Ephialtes”, distressed him physically and emotionally during the latter part of 1670. Being told that mineral waters were an excellent therapy, he went to “the springs at Lynn, and tarried there some weeks.” He had a profound religious experience of healing while he was “alone one morning under the trees.” His health improved, and he returned to his parish with renewed vigor and hope.

There surely were members of the North Church who wondered what type of invalid or hypochondriac they had for a minister. Their dissatisfaction, or perhaps their apathy, was reflected in their meagre support. Under the date of 1672, he noted in his Diary: “This year outward wants & family straits did exceedingly oppress me, & though it was in the power of the deacons of the church to have relieved me, they had no heart to do it.” Other notations of a similar nature appear throughout the year, ending with one on December 31: “Extremely grieved and distracted in my studies by the thoughts of my debts.”

He spent New Year’s Day, 1673, in prayer and fasting in his study. At the end of the day he wrote a prayer of saintly devotion: “Lord, if thou wilt provide for me and answer my prayers, I will love thee and bless thee and serve thee. If thou wilt not provide for me, I will love thee and bless thee and serve thee. If thou wilt cast me off, I will not cast thee off. I deserve that thou shouldst cast me off; but thou, Lord, never deserved it at my hands.”

It was not until the following November that relief came to him from his debts. He received several new members into the North Church, including “Sir Thomas Temple, Captain Lake, and some others of the government.” Whether they raised a purse for him or prodded the deacons into action, he does not specify. In any event, “understanding how things were with me, they took especial care for my supply.” Consequently, he held his own personal day of thanksgiving, and among his blessings he noted his family of two sons and three daughters, his “lot in Boston, the most public place in New England”, and “the liberty of my ministry at a time when thousands of the Lord’s faithful servants have been deprived of this great mercy.”

During the first decade of his ministry in Boston, Increase Mather had been beset by the trials and troubles of a Job – physical illness, emotional disturbance, family want. He also endured, perhaps without conscious awareness, what Perry Miller termed “a silent revolution within the New England mind”,<sup>13</sup> which by his reckoning extended from 1660 to 1690. In the first generation of English settlers, especially to theological interpreters like John Cotton and Richard Mather, the expressions of divine displeasure were visible and objective – such as drought and famine, storm and shipwreck. But in the first American-born generation, the stress was placed

THE NECESSITY  
OF  
REFORMATION  
With the Expedients subservient  
thereunto, asserted;

in Answer to two

Q U E S T I O N S

- I. *What are the Evils that have provoked the Lord to bring his Judgment on New-England?*
- II. *What is to be done that so those Evils may be Reformed?*

*Agreed upon by the*  
ELDERS and MESSENGERS  
*Of the Churches assembled in the*

SYNOD

*At Boston in New-England,*

Sept. 10. 1679.

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*Mal. 3. 7.* Even from the dayes of your Fathers yee are gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them, Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Host: but ye said, Wherein shall we return?

*Rev. 2. 4, 5.* Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and Repent, and doe the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou Repent.

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B O S T O N;  
Printed by John Foster. In the Year, 1679.

on God's displeasure against invisible and subjective sins – such as envy, avarice, and sensuality – to be followed by personal punishment rather than widespread natural disaster. No one played a more influential role in shaping this silent revolution than Increase Mather.

Yet there were exceptions in which he harkened back to the fire-and-brimstone prophecies, not only of his English fathers but of the Hebrew prophets. For example, he had a premonition in the autumn of 1676 that “Boston would be punished with the judgment of fire.” In a none-too-popular sermon he warned the congregation of the North Church on November 19, 1676, of his premonition. The next Sunday night a conflagration broke out in the neighborhood and burned both his home and his meetinghouse. But “God remembered mercy with judgment”, for only eighty of his books were burned, and a thousand were saved, plus many irreplaceable manuscripts. He also rejoiced in a professional advantage he had not foreseen: “For the space of half a year I preached at the other meeting houses of Boston, so that by the occasion of His providence, I had an opportunity to preach to all Boston.” Increase Mather once again, passing through the valley of Baca, saw it as a place of springs!

**I**N his fortieth year, as he went from pulpit to pulpit, he sounded the call for repentance and reform. He discussed his convictions and possible courses of action with his brother-ministers. In 1679, according to *Parentator*, “upon a motion by Mr. Mather in conjunction with others excited by him for it, the General Court called upon the Churches to send their Delegates for a Synod.”

The Reforming Synod, as it came to be known, opened the first of its sessions in the Town House in Boston on September 10, 1679. Mather's ideas and influence were apparent throughout the sessions. Not only was he instrumental in calling the Synod, but he preached twice before it, and he was delegated to write its conclusions and present them to the General Court.

He presented the formal “Result”, later printed as *The Necessity of Reformation*, and preached “a very Potent Sermon” to the General Court on October 15, 1679. The Court voted “it meet to commend the same to the serious consideration of all the churches and people in this jurisdiction.” (*Records of Mass. Bay*, V, 244.)

The members of the General Court, no less than those who composed the Reforming Synod, were deeply concerned about “the Lord's judgments on New England”. The scars left by the Indian raids of 1675-76 were still evident; Boston suffered another and even worse fire a few weeks before



the Synod met; the dreaded smallpox had again broken out. Add to these visitations, the appearance of English agents with kingly blessing, determined to establish Epispcacy in the Puritan commonwealths, and one sees the brimming cup of “the Lord’s judgments”.

Increase Mather, however, did not mention these things in his prepared “Result of the Synod.” They were too painfully familiar to need spelling out. What he did was to draw up the conclusions of the Synod under two main headings, each of them a question.

First, “What are the Evils which have provoked the Lord to bring his Judgments on New England?” The evils form an unlucky number – thirteen, in fact, which are described in as many paragraphs. They range from “a great and visible decay of the power of Godliness” through “inordinate passions” and “much intemperance,” and finally to the want of “a public Spirit in the most of men.” The skeletal list is clothed with the flesh of several abhorrent examples: “There are some Traders who sell their goods at excessive rates, Day-Labourers and Mechanics are unreasonable in their demands; Yea, there have been those who have dealt deceitfully and oppressively towards the Heathen amongst whom we live.”

The second section of the “Result” of 1679 deals with the question, “What is to be done that so these Evils may be Reformed?” The answers form an apostolic twelve, beginning with “our adherance unto the Faith and Order of the Gospel” as previously expressed in the *Cambridge Platform* of 1648. Reformation would be promoted by the “establishment and execution of wholesome Laws” as well as “solemn and explicit Renewal of the Covenant.” Increase Mather, now a Fellow of Harvard College, concluded with an answer that would be a continuing theme in his future career: “It is good that effectual care be taken respecting Schools of Learning. The interest of Religion and good Literature have been wont to rise and fall together. The Colledge and all other Schools of Learning must be duly inspected and encouraged.”

The Reforming Synod met for a second session in Boston, January to May, 1680. Its purpose was to write a confession of faith for the churches. The delegates had before them copies of the Savoy Declaration, agreed upon by English Congregationalists in their meeting at the Savoy in 1658. By adopting the principal doctrines set forth in the Savoy Declaration, the Reforming Synod in Boston forged the bond all the more securely with their English brethren. Increase Mather served as moderator of this second session, and wrote the preface for *A Confession of Faith*, printed in 1680. He was the “architect” of the Boston *Result and Confession*, much as his father had been a generation earlier of the *Cambridge Platform*.

The influence of the Reforming Synod was felt throughout the colony. Churches were challenged anew, and they responded with evangelical fervor. Membership rolls increased, particularly with young people who were attracted by the clarion call to reformation. Unfortunately, however, “the Evils which have provoked the Lord” were not subdued. The political climate in New England grew worse during the last years of the 17th century, and its citizens were kept so busy “shovelling out” that they had little time or concern for anything else. Moral and spiritual reformation seemed a distant ideal compared with the immediate realities of Governor Andros’ tyranny, the loss of the Massachusetts charter, and the French raids by land and sea.

If *The Necessity of Reformation* was “a series of jeremiads”, as has often been asserted, and if Increase Mather and his brother-ministers continued to preach in those tones, they were doing no more than confronting their tragic times with the divine judgment. Jeremiah had done the same in ancient Judah, and history proved his “jeremiads” to be right! The ministers of the Reforming Synod were in the prophetic tradition, and their call to repentance and reformation did not fall altogether on deaf ears.

During this era Samuel Sewall, “the New England Pepys”, who later became chief justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court, began keeping his *Diary*. Sewall commented on private and public affairs over the course of fifty-five years, 1675-1730. Under the date of November 12, 1685, he noted that “the Ministers of the Town came to the court and complain against a Dancing Master who seeks to set up here and hath mixt Dances.” Apparently he was looking for trouble, for he arranged to have his principal dance of the week on Thursday evening, in direct competition with the weekly lecture in the churches. “ ’Tis reported”, continued Sewall, “he should say that by one Play he could teach more Divinity than Mr. Willard (of the South Church), or the Old Testament. Mr. Moodey (of the First Church) said ’twas not a time for N.E. to dance. Mr. Mather struck at the Root, speaking against mixt dances.”

A week later Judge Sewall worshipped at the North Church, and heard a different theme stressed from the pulpit: “Mr. Mather Preaches from Numb. 25.11. Shewed that Love was an ingredient to make one zealous: those that received good People received Christ, Mat. 25. Said that if the Government of N.E. were zealous might yet save this People.” Whether speaking against mixt dances or preaching on divine love, Mr. Mather was not lacking in zeal.

HE honor and even popularity he now enjoyed from the people of his church – contrary to his early Boston ministry – was illustrated by the events of 1681. For the previous seven years he had been a Fellow

A BRIEF  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
WAR  
WITH THE  
INDIANS  
IN  
NEW-ENGLAND.

From *June 24. 1675.* (when the first *Englishman* was Murdered by the *Indians*) to *August 12. 1676.* when *Philip*, alias *Metacomet*, the principal Author and Beginner of the War, was slain.

Wherein the Grounds, Beginning, and Progress of the War, is summarily expressed. Together with a serious EXHORTATION to the Inhabitants of that Land.

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By INCREASE MATHER, Teacher of a Church of Christ, in Boston in New-England.

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Lev. 26. 25. *I will bring a Sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of the Covenant.*  
Psal. 107. 43. *Whofo is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving Kindness of the Lord.*

Jer. 22. 15. *Did not thy Father do Judgement and Justice, and it was well with him?*

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Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis commissa fidelibus.      *Horat.*  
Lege Historiam ne fias Historia.      *Cic.*

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London, Printed for Richard Chiswell, at the Rose and Crown in St. Pauls Church-Yard, according to the Original Copy Printed in New-England. 1676.



of Harvard College, but now he was offered a larger role in its administration. Thus he wrote in his *Autobiography*: "In the year 1681, my intimate dear friend, Mr. Oaks, the godly, learned president of the college died. The Overseers of the College desired me to manage the Commencement Week, which I complied with. After which both the fellows and overseers chose me president in Mr. Oaks room, but the church to which I am related, not consenting to that motion, I declined that overture."

He seems to have passed through no anguish of soul in deciding to decline the Harvard presidency. He was doubtless relieved, as well as complimented, by the vote of the North Church. After all, why should he wish to leave the ministry of a thriving, influential church of about fifteen hundred members, who were expressing a new loyalty toward him, in order to preside over a seminary having only a score of students and two tutors? The college was still, to use his phrase, "in a low and languishing state." There were no graduates in the class of 1682; three in 1683; and nine in 1684. The following year, however, a large class of fourteen graduated, including one of his sons, Nathaniel, and two nephews, Warham Mather and Rowland Cotton. Increase continued to serve his Alma Mater on the Board of Fellows; he continued to manage the commencements; and on June 11, 1685, he was given the title of Acting President.

Indicative of his interest in more than strictly theological learning, and of his desire to exchange views with other men of scholarly interests, he organized a philosophical society in Boston during the spring of 1683. Even though this "Philosophical Society of Agreeable Gentlemen, who met once a fortnight", (as it was described in *Parentator*), did not long survive, because of the political upheavals of the next few years, it was fruitful while it lasted. Its "additions to the stores of Natural History" were sent along to the Royal Society in London, and were also noted by a Leyden professor, Senguerdius, in his *Philosophia Naturalis*. The Boston society not only underscores the Mather interest in a budding science as early as 1683, but it has the distinction of being the first philosophical and scientific society, of which there is any record, to be organized in the American colonies.

**B**Y the time Increase Mather organized the Boston Philosophical Society, he had published thirty-eight works, which included several prefaces and sermons. The earliest of his printed works known to us was the preface to John Davenport's *Another Essay for Investigation of the Truth*, (Cambridge Press, 1663).

Of far greater length and historical value is *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New England*. Similar editions appeared shortly after the war ended in 1676, in both Boston and London.

He kept notes on the war for his “own private use”, and with no expectation of publishing them. But “To the Reader”, he related that two New Englanders had already published in London their narratives of the war, having “abounding mistakes.” “I was thereby quickened to expedite what I had in hand.”

Edward Wharton and John Easton published accounts of the Indian War in 1675, months before it had ended. Both men were Quakers with a strong bias in favor of Indians. Eaton ended his narrative with a stinging indictment against the Puritan clergy: “I am so perswaded of New England Priests, they are so blinded by the spirit of persecution, and to maintain to have hyer, and to have rume to be mere hyrelings, that they have been the Case [cause] that the law of nations and the law of arems have bine violated in this war.” Such invective, typical of Quaker preaching and writing of that day, (happily long since past), aroused anti-Quaker sentiment in England and Ireland as well as the American colonies. Increase Mather was not one to let pass, without rebuttal, the charge that the New England clergy were the cause of the war. The record showed a forty-five year-old era of peace with the Indians, highlighted with sacrifices of men like the Rev. John Eliot, who lived amongst them and gave them a written grammar and Bible in their own tongue.

Mather’s *Brief History of the Warr* relates many stirring and tragic incidents, which would probably have been lost to posterity had he not assumed the role of historian. But the role, as he viewed it, was a modest one: “Designing only a Breviary of the History of this war, I have not enlarged upon the circumstances of things, but shall leave that to others who have advantages and leisure to go on with such an undertaking.”

While writing his *Brief History*, he also wrote and preached “An Earnest Exhortation to the Inhabitants of New England”, which was separately printed, and also appended to the two editions of the *Brief History*. In it he shows his sense of fairness toward the Indians while the war was still going on – particularly in the following passage: “The Indians have been scandalized by the English. It is well if some English have not the guilt of Indian bloud upon their souls . . . How sad it is that an Indian should write a Letter to an English man and thus express himself: When any hurt is done, you say we have done it, though we never did wrong to English-men and hope we never shall. You have *driven us from our houses and lands, but that which most troubles us is that whereas we began to know Jesus Christ, you have driven us away from serving God.*

“How many of us”, he continued, “have condemned all Praying Indians, crying out, they are all nought, there is not one good amongst them? And

what though some be Hypocrites? Are not some Praying English as perfidious, as hyocritical, in heart as profane as some Praying Indians?"<sup>14</sup> Such was the soul-searching preaching, courageous as it was unpalatable, that was heard in the North Church of Boston while Metacomet was still on the warpath.

Throughout several years, particularly the early 1680s, Increase Mather collected material for what would prove to be his most widely-read and quoted book. At a meeting of New England Congregational ministers in 1681, he proposed "the Faithful registering of remarkable providences". He sought the assistance of his brethren in providing him with materials, and they "desired him to begin and publish an essay." Assembling its contents over a period of at least three years, he produced a sizable volume of twelve chapters.

*An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* appeared in 1684 in two Boston editions. It had four London printings – in 1684, 1687, 1856, and 1890. (The two latter editions were entitled *Remarkable Providences Illustrative of the Earlier Days of American Colonization*. They had an impressive sale in late 19th century Britain and America.)

On first glance of a modern critic, the book may appear to be a collection of superstitions and wonder-works. Indeed, there are two chapters devoted to cases of witchcraft, and several examples of "Quakers judiciously plagued with spiritual judgments." The main body of the book, however, records a series of natural phenomena: "Concerning Remarkables about Thunder and Lightning"; "Of Remarkable Tempests in New England" and "Of Remarkable Sea-Deliverances." All are factually told with names and dates in a simple narrative style, yet some of the stories have considerable dramatic impact.

One example of a sea deliverance, told in details of alternating tragedy and humor, involved Major Edward Gibbons of Boston, "a gallant commander", and his crew. They were lost at sea for several weeks when their provisions gave out. Their prayers for deliverance went unanswered. "One of them made this sorrowful motion, that they should cast lots, which of them should die first, to satisfy the ravenous hunger of the rest. After many a sad debate, they come to a result, the lot is cast, and one of the company is taken, but where is the executioner to be found to act this office upon a poor innocent? . . . They went once more unto their prayers; and while they were calling upon God, he answered them, for there leaped a mighty fish into the boat, which no doubt made them quick cooks."

A few days later the pathetic ritual of casting lots and offering prayers was re-enacted. Again, in the nick of time, "a great bird alights, and fixes itself upon the mast, which one of the company espies, and he goes, and



A N  
E S S A Y

For the RECORDING of  
ILLUSTRIOUS  
Providences,

Wherein an Account is given of  
many Remarkable and very Me-  
morable Events, which have hap-  
pened in this last Age;

Especially in  
*NEW-ENGLAND.*

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By *INCREASE MATHER*,  
Teacher of a Church at *Boston* in  
*New-England.*

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*Pfal. 107.5. Oh that men would praise  
the Lord for his goodness, and for his  
wonderful works to the Children of  
Men. Psal. 145.4. One Generation  
shall praise thy works to another, and  
shall declare thy mighty acts.*

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*BOSTON IN NEW-ENGLAND*

Printed by *Samuel Green* for *Joseph Browning*,  
And are to be sold at his Shop at the corner of  
the *Prison Lane.* 1684.

there she stands till he took her with his hand by the wing. This was life from the dead a second time, and they feasted themselves herewith.”

But hunger returned. Again they cast lots and again they prayed. Finally one of the crew espied a ship on the horizon. “The vessel proves a French vessel – yea, a French pirate. Major Gibbons petitions them for a little bread, and offers ship and cargo for it. But the commander knows the Major (from whom he had received some signal kindnesses formerly at Boston), and replied readily and cheerfully – ‘Major Gibbons, not a hair of you or your company shall perish, if it lie in my power to preserve you.’ And accordingly, he relieveth them, and sets them safe on shore.”

A good sea story *this* in any age – and not unlike some verified deliverances during World War II. Anyone who has been through and escaped from such harrowing experiences, whether he be a Major Gibbons or a Captain Rickenbacker, is likely to see *Illustrious Providences* at work.

Increase Mather was interested in more than a recital of unusual and memorable events; his primary interest was in what he regarded as acts of Providence. While working on his book, he preached and published his sermon on “*The Doctrine of Divine Providence*, (Boston, 1684.) He noted that in universal terms, “a Wheel must have a Hand to guide it, or it will presently turn out of the way and fall to the ground.” So with the stars in their courses, and so with the cycle of worldly events. The providence of God may be seen through the workings of natural law. “That Law and Course of Nature which He hath established in the World, is a great and marvellous work.”

Mather acknowledged the limitations of *Illustrious Providences* in his Preface, and expressed the hope for a greater work to come: “I have often wished that the Natural History of New-England might be written and published to the world; the rules and method of that learned and excellent person Robert Boyle, Esq., being duely observed therein. It would best become some scholar that had been born in this land to do such a service for his country. Nor would I myself decline to put my hand (so far as my small capacity will reach) to so noble an undertaking, did not manifold diversions and employments prevent me from attending that which I should account a profitable recreation.”

In spite of the author’s modest claims, he had produced a notable work. By “the questionnaire method” which resulted in “case studies”, he had obtained and preserved many eye-witness accounts of unusual natural phenomena in the late 17th century New England scene. His eminent modern biographer, Kenneth B. Murdock, ranks *Illustrious Providences* as “one of the first scientific writings in America.”<sup>15</sup>

WHEN Increase Mather wrote the Preface to *Illustrious Providences* on New Year's Day 1684, he was indeed "engaged in manifold diversions and employments." Throughout this and several succeeding years, he devoted himself not only to academic and ecclesiastical duties, but to the concerns of a political crisis as well.

For more than a half century, the Massachusetts Bay colonists had revered, almost sanctified, their royal charter, granted to the original proprietors by King Charles I. It outlined their territories; it prescribed the basic forms of their government. Unlike other American colonists, they had their charter in their own possession. It represented the legal basis for their government, their property, their liberties. Their increasing self-government and spirit of independence, exercised well beyond the letter of the charter, had not gone unnoticed in Whitehall. But the colonists were given no warning of the death-blow that would strike their charter in 1684.

Toward the end of the year, a vessel arrived in Boston which brought the king's declaration announcing to the colonists that "except they would make a full submission and entire resignation to his pleasure, a *quo warranto* should be prosecuted against their charter."<sup>16</sup> Increase Mather was asked to deliver his "apprehensions on the question." He took his time in doing so, for he received communications from England and Holland, as well as from other New Englanders, before he put the arguments against submission into form. But having done so, he submitted them to some of the magistrates, who in turn "dispensed copies thereof, that they came into many hands, and were a means to keep the country from complying with that proposal."

Mather did not sign the document, but "the other party conjectured me to be the author . . . and were not a little displeased thereat." This marked the beginning of organized opposition against him by the king's party, as well as the beginning of his leadership in behalf of colonial resistance and the securing of a new charter.

When the freemen of Boston met on January 23, 1685, they requested him to be present and give his views. He made a brief speech which he summarized in his *Autobiography*: "As the question is now stated, (viz. whether you will make a full submission and entire resignation of the charter, and the privileges of it, to his majesty's pleasure), we shall sin against God if we vote an affirmative to it." He quoted the Biblical examples of Jephthah and Naboth, who refused to give to their king the inheritance they had received from their fathers. He asked what "our brethren hard by" – presumably in New York – had gained by their readiness to submit and comply. "And shall we do it then? I hope there is not one freeman in Boston that will dare to be guilty of so great a sin. However, I have discharged my conscience in thus declaring myself to you."



This little speech, reminding us of what Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry would be saying nearly a century later, made an impression, for “many of the freemen wept and said generally, we thank you, sir, for your instruction and encouragement.” The vote of the Boston freemen was unanimous in favor of non-submission. He added that “this act of Boston had great influence on the country, many of the towns following its example.”

For several years Increase Mather had been carrying the full burden of the teaching and pastoral duties at the North Church, ever since his colleague, John Mayo, “through the infirmities of old age did altogether fail.” Increase finally requested his Church to provide him an assistant. The congregation unanimously elected his son, Cotton, as their pastor. Increase did not initiate nor encourage the selection of his eldest son; in fact, he said he was “very backwards in consenting to their designs.” It was only after the church members had failed to agree on any other candidate that he agreed to Cotton’s election. By the choice of the congregation, there began a father-son ministerial partnership that was destined to last for nearly forty years – rare, if not unique, in the annals of American churchmanship.

Immediately after Cotton’s ordination, Increase was “a third time visited with a dangerous fever.” He was no sooner out of his sickbed than a ship from London brought him letters which told of “ill designs” against him in Whitehall.

He had provoked them, of course, by his little speech before the Boston freemen. But he rightly suspected that his views had been distorted through the “malice and perfidiousness” of Edward Randolph, who had held various offices as British agent in New England since 1676. It was common knowledge and a matter of record that, in reporting to the king in 1677, he made a direct attack on the legality of the Massachusetts charter. There was no love lost between him and the colonists, who regarded him as little more than an enemy spy in their midst.

Randolph was collector of customs in Boston when, according to Increase’s *Autobiography*, “the wicked Treasurer forged a letter that was full of treasonable expressions, pretended to be written at Boston, 10 m, 3 da, 1683, and then subscribed my name to it. Yet not so much as one line of it was ever written by me. Howbeit, that letter was read before the king and his council. This affliction proved a mercy to me, for it caused much prayer to be made for me-not only by my own flock, but up and down the country. It also put me upon renewing my covenant with God.” Many successive days were spent in fasting and prayer that “God would deliver New England.”

He recorded a premonition of deliverance on February 6, 1685, but it

was not until the following April that a ship brought the news of Charles II's death on that February date. What pleased him was not the king's death, but "by whose death Kirk's coming as governor to New England was prevented" – and *that* was the deliverance.

Once again, Increase Mather was invited to assume the presidency of Harvard College. Under the date of March 19, 1685, he noted: "The Overseers of the College did unanimously devolve the care of the College upon me." He again made it clear that he would not leave the ministry of the North Church in Boston, nor would he move to Cambridge. A compromise was reached, according to the Harvard records, by which he took "special care for ye Government of ye Colledge, & for that end to act as President till a further settlement be orderly made." He shared the president's modest salary with John Leverett and John Cotton, his nephew, who as tutors did most of "ye work that appertains to ye President." The following year the Bay Council, under the chairmanship of Joseph Dudley, appointed Mather "rector" of Harvard College. (He did not become "president" until 1692.)

The 1680s were a decade of kaleidoscopic change and political ferment in both Old and New England. Even the calendar was in confused transition. The Roman Catholic countries had adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582, which meant the dropping of ten days, (October 5-15), from the old Julian calendar, and dating the beginning of the civil year on January first. England and her colonies, however, did not adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1752. They continued to begin the civil year on Annunciation Day, March 25, although Scotland in 1600 adopted the January first provision of the Gregorian calendar – but not the other provisions! Hence, there was international, as well as personal, confusion about calendar dates. When, for example, Increase Mather entered an item in his Diary under March 19, 1684/5", the last annual number was "new style", in accord with modern reckoning. (So are dates recorded "new style" in this volume.)

Samuel Danforth launched the *New England Almanack*, 1686 edition, with this breezy verse:

Goe, Little Book, and once a week shake hands  
With thy Good Reader, whome (by High Commands)  
The Stars are made to wayt on dayly, Shew  
Futurityes unto him; Bid him view  
Seasons of th' tear, and Tides orderly set  
As Higher Influences them beget.

New England could see "Tides orderly set" all right, but she viewed them through "seasons of th' Tear." The "Futurityes" were indeed uncertain.

Following the forfeiture of the Bay Colony charter in the last year (1684) of Charles II's stormy reign, there were three men who dominated the New England political stage. The enmity between them and Increase Mather, the leading ministerial spokesman, was mutually shared.

One of them was Edward Randolph. Not only did he report to the king his antipathy toward the charter, but he published his attack in the pamphlet, "Representation of ye Affairs of N: England", (Lond, 1677), for all to see. While, as collector of customs, he was not greeted with a Boston Tea Party, he witnessed open defiance against the laws of trade. The relations between Randolph and the colonists were a continuing story of mutual distrust and bitter controversy.

Another was a native-born New Englander, Joseph Dudley, youngest son of the revered Governor Thomas, who had sailed with Winthrop on the *Arbella* in 1630. For a son of a founding father to advocate charter revision in favor of greater imperial control, and to do so in London as a colonial agent, was regarded as little short of treasonable by many of his fellow-colonists. After the charter was declared forfeit, a government pro-tem was set up in London for the Bay Colony. Dudley was named president of the Council and governor of Massachusetts and the King's Province. No sooner had he assumed office in May 1686, than the members of the Massachusetts General Court, who had exercised legislative powers for more than a century, protested the legality of Dudley's government. After only seven months' operation, it gave way to a more comprehensive and oppressive order of unification and centralized authority under the governorship of Sir Edmund Andros. Dudley, nevertheless, became the most prominent member of Andros' Council. While he was serving in a dual capacity as censor of the press and chief justice of the province, Dudley's popularity touched its nadir.

The royal governorship of Sir Edmund Andros over "the Dominion of New England" lasted only two years and four months, but it was the most despotic in her annals. Space does not here permit any detailed survey of his record. In summary it may be said that New England's opposition, which naturally centered in Boston, was aimed against Andros on three major counts. One was his "imperious disposition", exercised with regal authority and trappings, which annoyed rather than impressed Puritan Boston. Another was his decree of "taxation without representation", which deprived the colonists through their town meetings and General Court the right to tax themselves for schools, roads, care of the poor, etc. Under Andros and his Council, every town was told what it was to pay, without having a voice about the disposition of the taxes. This was not the New England Way!



**T**hat a Collony so considerable as *New-England* is, should be discouraged, is not for the Honour and Interest of the *English Nation*; in as much as the People there are generally Sober, Industrious, well-Disciplin'd, and apt for Martial Affairs; so that he that is Sovereign of *New-England*, may by means thereof (when he pleaseth) be Emperor of *America*: Nevertheless, the whole *English* Interest in that Territory has been of late in apparent danger of being lost and ruined, and the Miseries of that

The colonists' third grievance was even more serious, for it involved the land-titles of every citizen and town. The Massachusetts settlers had derived their property titles from their 1629 charter – or thought they had. In addition, many of them had paid the Indians for their land. But now, under Andros, they had to renew their titles or patents, through a scheme which permitted some of his officials to charge all the traffic would bear. Particularly exasperating was their fencing of several town commons, the communal cow pastures, on which the new patents were required. It seemed that no property, personal or communal, could escape from Andros' voracious snare. And it was done by verbal decree. As the *Narrative of the Miseries of New England*, an unsigned tract that has been attributed to the pen of Increase Mather, pointed out: "The laws were not printed, as was the custom in the former governments, so that the people were at a great loss to know what was law and what was not."

If one single act dramatized Andros' tyrannical nature, it was his forcible entrance into the South Church (Congregational) in order to worship by the Church of England liturgy. One of his first requests on arrival in Boston on December 20, 1686, according to Sewall's *Diary* of that date, was "to the Ministers . . . about accommodation as to a meeting-house." The following day the ministers and four laymen from each church met to consider the governor's request, and "'twas agreed that they could not with a good conscience consent that our Meeting-Houses should be made use of for Common-Prayer Worship". The following evening "Mr. Mather and Willard thorowly discoursed his Execellency about the Meeting-Houses in great plainness, showing that they could not consent."

From a present-day ecumenical viewpoint, such intolerance and inhospitality are incomprehensible. But not in 17th century New England – or old England either! To grant the governor's request, reasoned the churchmen of Boston, was to let the camel's head under the tent. But, with Andros as their adversary, they were powerless to prevent it. The following March 16th, Mather noted in his *Diary*: "S Edm Andros took possession of ye South Meeting house for ye Chh of England where kept their good friday & ye next L Day kept their Easter & had ye Sact accordg to the Liturgy." Mather described the episode more fully in one of his three *Vindication* works: "Governour Andros told them (who refused him the keys to South Church) that he would presently sieze on that House and all the Meeting Houses in the Country, and hinder them from contributing the Value of Two pence toward the maintenance of any Non-Conformist Ministers . . . They thrust themselves into that Meeting-house, and there continued until by interrupting the people of the South Congregation, often in their *Times*, sometimes in the very *Parts* of their Worship the whole Town cryed shame upon them."

With all due allowance for the emotional coloration of the above description, there is little doubt that this action of Andros galvanized the opposition of Boston against him and his administration.

**A** NEW chapter opened in the career of Increase Mather when, on May 19, 1687, a vessel arrived from London with a Declaration of Indulgence, issued by the new King, James II. Inspired by the king's Roman Catholic learnings, the Declaration nevertheless granted universal liberty of conscience. It was hailed in New England as a new Magna Charta for non-conformists.

Mather's imagination, if not his ambition, began to work overtime. How providential that at last the colonists could express thanksgiving for a royal favor, rather than protest an abuse! At a meeting of ministers in Boston during June 1687, he proposed that an address of thanks be sent to the king. The ministers concurred, and he proceeded to draft the address. He sent it to some gentlemen in London, unnamed in his *Autobiography*, who in turn presented it to the king. They wrote him that "it came very seasonally."

Probably the favorable reception given this document encouraged Increase to further diplomatic design and action. "In October, I moved that our churches, (and not the ministers only), might thank the king for his Declaration, which was readily complied with by ten churches." It seems to have been the consensus of opinion that this address of the churches was important enough to be delivered in London "by someone who will obtain an interest in such non-conformists as have the king's ear; and in special, take care of the well-settlement of the college." Increase was ready, able and willing. As the initiator of the proposed mission and head of Harvard College, he was the logical man to go to Whitehall. He was pleased that several of his brother-ministers urged him to go, and that "some of my Flock did, (to my amazement), signify their willingness." Such a voyage, however, was not to be anticipated lightly. He spent several days in fasting and prayer over it. He finally left the decision to the members of his church: "I know not how to discover the mind of God but by you. If you say to me, 'Stay', I shall stay. But if you say to me, 'Go', I shall cast myself on the goodness of God and go in his Name." The church meeting unanimously said *go*!

The diplomacy which he used in obtaining the consent of his flock would serve him well during the next four years. He knew that taking an address of thanks to the king would be only a curtain-raiser; the real drama would concern the overthrow of Andros' governorship and the granting of new charters for colony and college. That he realized the potential significance of his mission is indicated by the many pages he devoted to it in his *Autobiography*.



The preparations for his voyage were systematically interrupted during four months by Randolph, “the adversary of this Judah.” He had Mather arrested on Christmas eve, 1687, “for a pretended defamation.” The following month a jury cleared him of the charge, and ordered Randolph to pay the court costs. Two more attempts were made to arrest and detain him, but he foiled them by keeping his “doors shut and not going abroad”. On the night of March 30, 1688, he disguised himself in a wig and white cloak, fled his Boston parsonage, and found shelter in the Charlestown home of Colonel John Phillips, the father of his own daughter-in-law. After further undercover escapes, he and his son Samuel boarded an England-bound ship, *The President*, where they were “gladly received and comfortably accommodated.”

In spite of all his adventures and delays before sailing, he must have been in correspondence with friends at Court, for his audience with the king was quickly arranged. He kept a meticulous day-by-day diary throughout this fascinating period of his career: “On May 25, 1688, God brought me and my Samuel alive and in health to London. Here I met with Mr. Stephen Lobb, who was often at Court. He informed the king that I was come over from New England with some Addresses to his majesty, who appointed me to attend him the next day. May 30, I attended in the Long Gallery in Whitehall, where I knew the king would come about 11 o’clock. When he came, I offered to kneel, but the king bid me not to do it. I then said, ‘Sir, your Majesty’s most loyal subjects in New England do with all possible veneration present this Address of thanks to your Majesty, for your most gracious Declaration of Indulgence.’ The king replied, ‘Read it, sir’, which I did . . . He said, ‘I am glad my subjects in New England are sensible of any ease or benefit of my Declaration. I hope by a Parliament to obtain a *Magna Charta* for liberty of conscience.’ ”

At the beginning of his mission Mather took the assurances of James II at their face value. He knew that the King was “nearly fallen out with the Bishops”, and that he was courting the favor of nonconformists as well as papists. Incidentally, Mather noted that “the Roman Catholics at Court were very courteous to me.”

He became acquainted with William Penn, the Lord Proprietor of Pennsylvania, who was then very influential in royal circles. Mather apparently felt no animus toward Penn’s Quakerism, which was reciprocated by the Lord Proprietor, who certainly knew of the rowdy tactics employed by his fellow-believers against Puritansim in Massachusetts, and their consequent punishment. Mather in his *Autobiography* expresses only the highest regard and appreciation toward him.

“Mr. Penn, (when no one was present besides the King, Penn, and I,) advised King James to be kind to his subjects in New England. I have noted in my Diary, June 18, 1688, that Mr. Penn said to me, being then at Whitehall, that he had been considering N.E. affairs; that Nicholson [military aide of Andros] should be removed: that something should be sent to Andros that would nettle his nose; and that if he did not comply therewith, he should be turned out of his government.”

The provincial parson was making the right contacts at court. James II granted him four private audiences between June and October, 1688. In the first audience Mather could not have presented his case against the Andros government more diplomatically and effectively. The following conversation was recorded in his diary the day it was held:

“The king then asked me whether Sir Ed. Andros did give good satisfaction to his subjects there. I replied, ‘Sir, if he would but duly attend to your Majesty’s Declaration, the people there would be satisfied.’

“‘Does he not do it?’ said the king. I replied again: ‘There have been some of your subjects fined and imprisoned, because they, out of tenderness of conscience, declined swearing by the Book . . . The ministers in Boston proposed to their congregations that they might keep a day of thanksgiving to bless God for his goodness in making your Majesty their king. Sir Edmund sent for them and bid them to keep that day at their peril; and that if they did so, he would send soldiers that would guard them and their meeting-houses too; so that they durst not go on with their intended thanksgiving.’

‘I wonder at that,’ (said the king), ‘for in other plantations the governours themselves have sent me thanks for my Declaration’ . . .”

Increase Mather, if he had been less wise and diplomatic would have criticized the Andros government for its political tyranny and economic exploitation – and thereby lost the king’s ear, if not his own scalp. He chose the religious theme, which evoked a sympathetic response from the monarch.

At the end of the audience, “the king said: ‘Do you therefore bring to me in writing the things that trouble you.’ Upon this I kneeled to his Majesty, and he held out his hand to me, and I kissed it.” (What growth in tolerance and sophistication since the day he refused to wear cap and gown at his Trinity college graduation!)

At his next audience on July 2, he presented the king with a “Petition and Memorial in behalf of New England”, and he “put in a good word for a charter for Harvard College.” On September 26 the king assured him, “I will take the same care of New England as of England.” However Mather interpreted that statement, and whether or not he foresaw the imminent end

of James' reign, he "humbly prayed that the matter be expedited." The king assured him that "the thing shall be done with expedition."

Another three weeks passed and "I was again with the king in his closet. He then told me that property, liberty, and the college should be confirmed to us. This was the last time I had any conversation with *that* king."

During the fateful months of 1687-88, James II had more pressing concerns than New England on his mind. His Declaration of Indulgence, which had cheered Non-Conformists and Roman Catholics alike, had infuriated the Establishment. He made the grave mistake of trying to compel the bishops and clergy to read the Declaration from their pulpits. Seven bishops refused, whereupon James indicted them for libel. They were acquitted, amid popular rejoicing. To save himself from criticism in Parliament, he dissolved it immediately after issuing his Declaration. He antagonized the university authorities – as had James I – by insisting that they appoint Roman Catholic fellows.

While the king was engaged in these unpopular moves, prominent parliamentary leaders were keeping in touch with William of Orange. Fearing a Catholic succession after James II became the father of a son on June 10, 1688, the Whig lords sent their invitation to William a fortnight later to "bring over an army and secure the infringed liberties" of England. The following September 29th, William issued his famous "Declaration to the English People." He landed at Forbay on November 5th and waited it out, while many influential noblemen declared for him.

In the meantime, James, uncertain of the loyalty of both army and navy, tried to negotiate – but it was now too late. He had declined an offer of military assistance from Louis XIV; all that was left for him now was to flee to France for asylum, which he did during Christmas week, 1688.

William summoned a convention parliament the following month. He and his wife, Mary, were proclaimed joint-sovereigns on February 13, 1689.

While Increase Mather did not record his impressions of these turbulent events, he evidently shed no tears over the flight of a Roman Catholic king, and the coming of William and Mary, staunch Protestants, to the throne of England. But he must have had regrets that his charter mission, which James had failed to expedite, would have to be undertaken anew.

"Boston's first Revolution", as it has been termed, broke out against the imperious Andros and his associates in April, 1689, soon after the news of William and Mary's accession was learned. Increase had a full account of it when the news reached England, but since Cotton Mather played a leading role in the drama, it will be discussed in the following chapter.



The new king was an extremely busy man – organizing a government in London, commuting back and forth to Holland, and attempting to stave off French threats of war. Increase made no attempt to obtain a royal audience during William's first months in England, but he was by no means idle. He developed "an intimate acquaintance" with Sir Henry Ashmont, and together they became official agents for New England. He also, according to his *Autobiography*, "became acquainted with the leading men in the Convention-Parliament", through whose influence "a bill for reversing the judgment against the old charter did pass the House."

More difficult for us to understand – and pleasant to ponder – were the mutually trustful relations this plain Puritan parson established with Anglican bishops and ladies of the court. With regard to the former group, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Tillotson, "did, upon my solicitations, oftentimes concern himself for the good of the colony." An even friendlier ecclesiastic was the Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Burnet, "who told me that he would declare openly in the House of Lords that there was a greater sacredness in the Charter of New England than those of corporations of England, because these were only Acts of Grace, whereas the charter of New England was a contract between the king and first planters . . . I remember Lord Wharton said to me that having engaged the bishop of Salisbury to appear for New England was the best job I had done."

The Ladies of honor, whose interest in New England affairs Mather successfully courted, included the Countess of Sunderland, the Countess of Anglesey, Lady Chilton, and Madame Lockhart. It was the Countess of Sunderland who reported to him (on October 6, 1690) that Queen Mary had said, "Trouble yourself no more about New England. They shall have what they desire." It was Lady Lockhart who presented him to the Queen for private audience on April 19, 1691. He assured her that, contrary to certain misrepresentations at court, her New English subjects were favorably disposed toward monarchy, and that they would 'endeavor to enlarge your Majesty's domains.'

'Are they able to do it?' she asked. 'I hear they are in a bad condition.'

'They are in a very deplorable condition, but one reason of it is because the government there remains unsettled . . . If by their Majesties' favour, they shall be restored to their former privileges, they will revive, and will be able to serve your majesty's interests'."

The Queen then asked about differences of church government, and Mather replied that New Englanders "generally are Non-Conformists, but they carry it with all due respect to others." Then he praised the Act of Indulgence and liberty of conscience, probably aware of the royal response he would have.

“‘That I am for’, said the Queen. ‘It is in the power of men to believe what they please, and therefore I think they should not be forced in matters of religion, contrary to their persuasion and consciences. I wish all good men were of one mind; however, I would have them live peaceably and love one another.’”

Enlightened doctrine indeed for a 17th century monarch! Her loyal subject, well trained in the ways of theocracy, had also adopted the way of tolerance and respect toward other religious persuasions.

Mather reported in his *Autobiography* five audiences he had with King William from July 4, 1689 to January 3, 1692. Most of them included the familiar plea for “the restoration of our ancient liberties, and that their settlement be expedited.”

William did not make any easy promises only to forget them, as James had done. The new king moved with caution, for he wanted it proved to him that New Englanders were loyal to the crown. He had heard otherwise from Andros and Randolph, who had returned to London – after being released from their Boston imprisonment – with their version of Yankee cussedness. Even the two new agents, Elisha Cooke and Thomas Oakes, whom the General Court in Boston had sent to London to assist Mather, were evasive in supporting either his charges against Andros or his pleas for charter restoration.

On still other counts he was frustrated during his last months in London. He had hoped from the beginning to have parliamentary action on the charter, and had sought the support of leaders of both Houses. He was gratified when the House of Lords on November 2, 1689, “voted that the judges should draw up a bill for the restoring of charters, which vote of the Lords quickened the house of Commons to go on with their bill.” But he was greatly disappointed when this session dissolved without favorable action. The next Commons was predominantly Tory, and not inclined toward charter restoration. “So that now no way was left but only to get the best we could at Court, through solicitations in the years 1690 and ’91.”

What they finally got in the autumn of 1691, after lengthy negotiations with the Attorney-General and member of the Privy Council — every item being subjected to review by the king and queen — was a new charter. It created a new and larger province to be known as Massachusetts Bay, comprising the former colonies of Massachusetts and Plymouth, along with the territories of Maine and Nova Scotia. No westward boundary was drawn; presumably it was to be the Pacific Ocean! The charter provided that there should be a governor, lieutenant-governor and secretary — all to be appointed by the king. The General Court (Legislature) would have two







branches: a House of Representatives to be chosen as heretofore by the towns; and a Council of twenty-eight members to be selected annually by the representatives, subject to the governor's approval. Bills passed by the General Court were subject to his veto. The most striking change in the new charter concerned the franchise: a voter no longer was required to be a church member, but he was required to have a freehold worth two pounds sterling a year or personal property of forty pounds. Inhabitants of the province were to enjoy "all the liberties and immunities of free and natural subjects . . . as if they were born within the realm of England." Trees measuring two feet in diameter at a foot's distance from the ground, growing on common land, were to be reserved for the use of the royal navy.

Such were the principal provisions of "The Mather Charter", now impressively displayed alongside the original charter in the Archives Museum of the Massachusetts State House. The 1691 charter gave the king and his governor more direct control over colonial affairs than had been specified in the original 1629 charter. But it also guaranteed "the ancient liberties"; popular elections of the General Court, taxation *with* and *by* representation, freedom of worship, and "all liberties and immunities" enjoyed in the Mother Country.

Even though the new charter did not incorporate everything that Increase Mather had sought through tedious negotiations, he realistically accepted it as the best attainable. If he had any objections to the change in voting qualifications "from Puritan weal to Yankee wealth", he did not voice them. He was grateful that liberty under law was again secured for his homeland. His fellow-agents, Cooke and Oakes, who had been in London only for the latter part of the negotiations, refused to give the new charter their approval. Whether or not it was their intent at the time, they were able to return home and attack "the Mather charter", which was certain to be unpopular with some citizens because it was different from the original one.

Mather's mission in England lasted much longer than he originally expected; a few weeks extended into four years. These were busy, fruitful years, filled with academic and ecclesiastical pursuits as well as political. He did not neglect his calling as a minister of the Gospel, for he "preached every Lord's Day, very often twice the same day."

He had had experience, like his father before him, in moderating church synods, and in England he was invited to assist in the Union of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. He was told by leaders of the movement that he had a decisive influence in effecting the merger. (Cotton Mather's *Parentator* records the laudatory scroll that was addressed and presented to him by the Uniting Synod.)

The friendships which he made during these years included scientists, as well as clergymen and statesmen. According to his diaries, he often visited Robert Boyle, “father of the science of pneumatics”. He admired Boyle’s experiments with gases and magnets; he bought Boyle’s published works, transported them to America, and introduced them to his Harvard students. Boyle, who was also a pious Puritan, was as certain as Mather that his scientific discoveries were illustrious providences.

At intervals during his charter mission, he visited Oxford, where his father had studied, and Cambridge, where his father-in-law had taught. He does not record what contacts he made, but it is probable that whatever academic doors the Harvard rector wished to enter were opened to him.

His closest of many friendships was with Richard Baxter, the foremost of English Puritan leaders. Shortly before Mather’s arrival in England, Baxter had spent eighteen months in prison, sentenced “on the ridiculous charge of libelling the Church in his *Paraphrase of the New Testament*,” in a trial that was “among the most brutal perversions of justice which have occurred in England.” He left prison at the age of seventy to continue his preaching and writing. His saintly spirit and scholarly talents were more evident and revered than ever. He and Mather often conversed and exchanged letters. In one dated August 3, 1691, Baxter wrote him: “Dear Brother: I thought I had been near dying at twelve o’clock in bed; but your book revived me: I lay reading it until between one and two . . . I loved your *father*, upon the letters I received from him. I love *you* better for your learning, labours, and peaceful moderation. I love *your son* better than either of you, for the excellent temper that appeareth in his writings . . . God preserve you and New England.”<sup>18</sup> (This was one of Baxter’s last letters; he died four months later in London.)

Mather’s voyage home was delayed because his son Samuel came down with smallpox. He saw that, like former adversities in his life, this was a blessing in disguise. If he had not been detained, “Andros might have returned as governour”, and “New England would have been in the same case with New York, Virginia, and the other Plantations.” Because of his delay he was accorded two more audiences with King William. In the first he humbly thanked the king for the new charter and for the privilege of nominating the new governor, Sir William Phips.

On January 3, 1692, Mather and Phips had a final audience in which the king wished them a good voyage home. The last dialogue that Mather reported in his *Autobiography* concerned Harvard College: “‘We in New England have an Academy or College. Many an excellent Protestant divine has had his education there.’ The King said: ‘I know it’. I thereupon added:

‘If your Majesty will cast a favorable aspect on that society, it will flourish more than ever.’ The king’s return to me was ‘I shall willingly do it.’ ”

Mather’s long, often-delayed mission was carried on at considerable expense to himself. Toward its conclusion, he wrote to the pro-tem government in Boston: “Besides what was sent to me out of New England, I expended upwards of *Two Hundred Pounds* of my Personal Estate, out of love to that people. And I did, for their sakes, borrow of a merchant in London the above *Three Hundred Pounds* more, which it was two years before care was taken for the Repayment of it . . . I engaged all the estate I have in the World, for the Repayment thereof.” (This financial sacrifice, later to be ignored or misrepresented by his fellow-citizens, tasted to him of wormwood and gall to the end of his life.)

He set sail in company with Governor Phips from Plymouth, Devonshire on March 29, 1692, and had “a comfortable passage” of more than six weeks. The only incident he noted was a near-capture by four French men-of-war. He arrived in Boston to find “wife, sons and daughters all alive and in gracious measure of health. Blessed be His glorious Name forever!”

**T**HE four years which Increase Mather spent on his charter mission were unquestionably the most interesting of his long career, both to himself and to a modern reader. They were also a rewarding epoch, in spite of many disappointments and frustrations. He had climbed to a summit of prestige, diplomacy and statesmanship in London which no other New Englander had yet attained – and would not be matched until Benjamin Franklin went on his diplomatic missions to Europe a century later. But he who climbs a mountain must come down. If he has received anything at the summit – a vision, a decalogue, a charter – he must be prepared to defend it. The defense against criticism or apathy is never as invigorating as the upward climb and the peak-attainment, as Mather learned in the familiar pattern.

Troubles, aside from the charter, awaited him on his return to Boston. Of immediate concern were the witchcraft delusions centered in Salem Village, but plaguing the whole province. Because his son Cotton was more actively engaged in the whole tragic drama, it will be discussed in the next chapter. Enough here to quote Increase’s succinct summary: “I found the country in a sad condition by reason of witchcraft and possessed persons. The judges and many of the people had espoused the notion that the devil could represent an innocent person afflicting others. I doubt that innocent blood was shed by mistakes of that nature. I therefore published my *Cases of Conscience* de witchcraft, etc. By which (it is said) many were enlightened,



# CASES of CONSCIENCE

Concerning

## Evil Spirits

Personating MEN;

## WITCHCRAFTS,

Infallible Proofs of Guilt in such as are  
Accused with that CRIME.

All Considered according to the Scriptures, History,  
Experience, and the Judgment of many Learned  
MEN.

By Increase Mather, President of Harvard Colledge at Cambridge, and Teacher of a Church at Boston in New England

P R O V. xxii. xxi.

— That thou mightest Answer the Words of Truth, to them  
that send unto thee.

*Efficiunt Dæmones, ut quæ non sunt, sic tamen, quasi sint, conspicienda hominibus exhibeant. Lactantius Lib. 2. Instit. Cap. 15. Diabolus Consultitur, cum iis mediis utimur aliquid Cognoscendi, quæ a Diabolo sunt introducta. Ames Cas. Conf. L. 4. Cap. 23.*

Printed at Boston, and Re-printed at London, for John  
Dunton, at the Raven in the Poultry. 1693.

juries convinced, and the shedding of more innocent blood prevented.”

Whether or not he overstated the results of his influence, he displayed wisdom and courage by setting forth higher standards of evidence than those used by the judges and generally accepted by the frenzied citizenry. If his standards of evidence and procedure had been in vogue when the trials started, there could have been no sentences of guilt and execution. The record shows that the trials came to a halt, even though more were scheduled, immediately after the publication of his *Cases of Conscience*.

Another matter on which he acted promptly was the presentation of a petition to the General Assembly for “An Act for the Incorporation of the Colledge.” Failing to obtain either a royal or parliamentary charter while in England, and distressed about the charterless status of Harvard College, he had sought and received legal opinion in London. He had been advised to follow his present course. The General Assembly in Boston passed the Act of Incorporation, by which, according to *Parentator*, “the College was enabled among other things to confer Degrees, which could not by its former Charter be pretended to; and particularly, to create Bachelours and Doctors of Theology.”

On November 17, 1692, a diploma inscribed in Latin (of course!) was presented to D. Crescentius Matherus, awarding him the degree of S.S. Theologiae Doctorem. He received Harvard’s first doctoral degree, the one and only recipient until Nathaniel Appleton was awarded an S.T.D. in 1771.

The governorship of Sir William Phips, whom Mather nominated and King William appointed, started off auspiciously. He took the oath of office at Boston’s Town House, and heard the new charter read in the presence of the General Court. Before it adjourned, the Court appointed “a day of solemn thanksgiving to Almighty God for granting a safe arrival to his Excellency our Governour, and the Reverend Increase Mather, who have industriously endeavored the service of this people, and have brought over with them a settlement of government in which their Majesties have given us distinguishing marks of their royal favour and goodness.”<sup>19</sup>

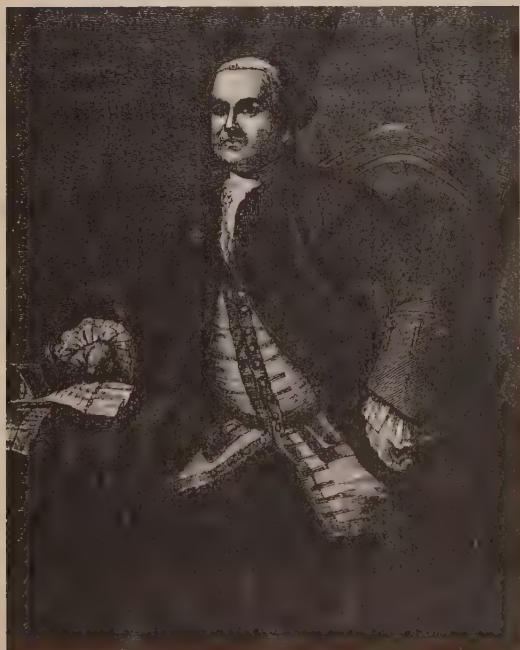
The honeymoon, unhappily was soon ended for the Phips administration. French and Indian raids continued, particularly along the borders of Maine, which was under his jurisdiction. He was criticized for failing to halt the raids and massacres, although he had neither the troops nor supplies to meet the challenge victoriously. He did act quickly and decisively in the witchcraft tragedy by appointing, contrary to a provision in the new charter, a special commission of *Oyer and Terminer* to conduct the trials in Salem. As a public reaction against the trials set in, especially against the obstinacy and cruelty of William Stoughton, the chief judge, the governor was blamed for



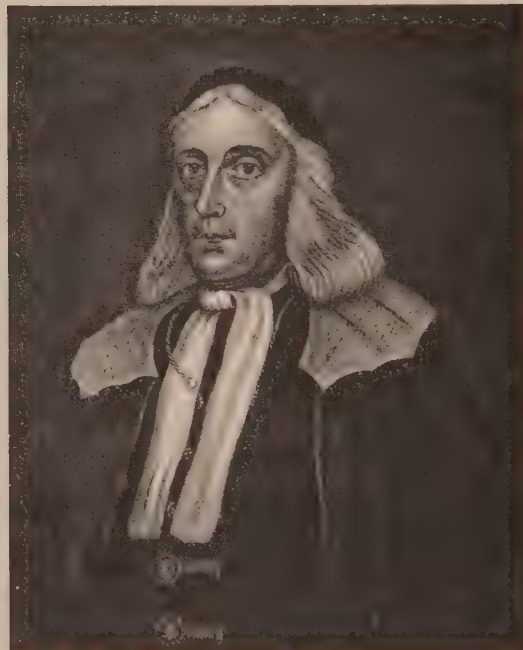
Samuel Sewall  
"The Puritan Pepys"



Sir Edmund Andros  
"The Foe of this Judah"



Sir William Phips (or Phipps)  
Mass. Province Governor (1692-4)



William Stoughton  
Chief judge of the Salem trials



the excesses of the court he had appointed. Acting impetuously, as he often did with his “quarter-deck mentality”, he rued the day he appointed the witchcraft court. After all, the jurisdiction properly belonged to the provincial legislature.

The day-by-day tasks of the new government seemed even more difficult than in the earliest days of the colony. Now, as then, a whole new body of laws and procedures had to be formulated. But now, unlike the days of the original charter, every new law of the colony was subject to review and possible veto in Whitehall. Three months longer elapsed between the passage of a law and the returned word of its approval or rejection by the king. Both the governor and legislators were plagued by legal confusions and political uncertainties during this era of testing a new charter and forging a new government.

In London meanwhile, Dudley and Randolph, who were not without their friends in court, spearheaded the opposition against Phips. He was recalled in 1694 to answer charges of misconduct and misrule. He did not stand trial, for he died within a few weeks after his arrival in London.

Because Mather had been closely identified with Phips, his own popularity and political influence declined with Phips’ fall. The criticisms which were levelled against him, defiling his motives and castigating “the Mather Charter”, wounded him deeply. Of this period he wrote in his *Autobiography*: “I have received more discouragement in the work of the Lord by those in government than by all the men in the world besides.” At a later date, in what is now less faded ink, he added a marginal insert: “Let not my children put too much confidence in men. It may be such as you have laid under the greatest obligations of gratitude, will prove most unkind to you. I have often had experience of it.”

HE had experience of it in academic affairs as well. There were bound to be comments about “headless Harvard” during his long sojourn in England. On his return, he introduced the liberal, scientific theories of Copernicus, Newton, and Boyle. But he insisted on the religious orthodoxy of the *Cambridge Platform*, however radical it had been in his father’s generation. He reinstated daily chapel, which had been intermittent during his absence. But these were not the acts which forced him out of the Harvard presidency.

The opposition came to a head in 1701, not within the college corporation or the student body, but within the Massachusetts legislature. The opposition was led by Elisha Cooke, his erstwhile co-agent in London, who was his opponent on the subject of the charter as well. Cooke and his party could not thrust Mather from the Harvard presidency on grounds of

To His Excellency the Governour,  
and The General Assembly of the Province,  
(The Address of the Ministers met  
at Boston 27<sup>th</sup> - 1703.

The Languishing state of Learning and of Schools, that are the necessary means to uphold Learning, among us, has touched us with a very sensible concern, that we cannot but express and repeat upon all occasions, untill we see (which God forbid!) our condition totally desperate.

If our Excellency, and the General Assembly need not be put in mind, that Grammar Schools, wherein the Youth may by able Masters entirely devoted unto that Service, and supported with Salaries that shall be sufficient for them and their families, be taught the things that are necessary to qualifye them for future Serviceableness, and have their manners therewithal well formed under a laudable Discipline, would be a glory to our Land, and a masterpiece of all our other Glories.

We do not presume to suggest methods that may be further taken, to save the life of Learning, and of what else we do with sorrow see dying with. But inasmuch as our Genl Assembly have of late years had a bill once and again before them, and sometimes well nigh digested, into an happy Maturity, relating to this important matter: We humbly desire, that the consideration thereof may be resumed, and that it may be the Honourable Character and Memorial of the present Governmt, that good Literature with all the blessed effects of it, hath now been cherished, in the zeal of a public Spirit, that shall deserve to be forever memorable.

Increase Mather  
Sam<sup>l</sup> Willard

In Council -

Read and Approved Nath<sup>l</sup> Simonds Willard  
and John Walley Esq<sup>r</sup> &c. &c. in the name of the other ministers  
met at Boston 27<sup>th</sup> - 1703.  
and the Committee, into which as shall be named

"The Languishing state of Learning," written by Increase Mather and co-signed by Samuel Willard, was addressed to the Governor and General Assembly. (1703.)

ability and reputation. They found his Achilles' heel in his refusal to move to Cambridge, which actually he had done one winter, only to conclude that the climate, like "the moist Irish air" of an earlier day, did not agree with him. He made it plain that he preferred the climate, social as well as atmospheric, of north Boston. Whatever the case against him, it was scarcely decided with grace and dignity. Through a series of legislative shenanigans, which included vote-taking while most of his friends were out for lunch, he was relieved of the presidency. The Reverend Samuel Willard, by a Council vote of eleven ayes and ten nays, was elected to succeed him, but with the title of vice-president. To Mather the unkindest cut of all was that Willard did not move to Cambridge!

During the twenty-six years Increase Mather was officially associated with the administration of Harvard College, first as a fellow, and later as rector and president, he had a hand in laying foundations which have endured. Throughout his term of office, longer than any of his five predecessors in the presidency, he was devoted to the cornerstone of truth. While *Veritas* most real and relevant to him came through divine revelation, hear him in a Latin oration he delivered at a Harvard commencement. Having disagreed with Aristotle (as usual), because he "represents the world as uncreated and denies the possibility of the immortality of the soul", President Mather concluded: "To Aristotle some prefer Pyrrho, founder of the Sceptics; Zeno, founder of the Stoics; Plato, the founder of the Academicians. But you who are accustomed to philosophize in a *liberal* spirit, are pledged to the formulas of no master; and you should moreover remember that one truly golden sentiment of Aristotle: 'Find a friend in Plato, a friend in Socrates', (and I say a friend in Aristotle) 'but be sure, above all, to find a friend in truth.'"<sup>20</sup> What greater standard of intellectual freedom and adventure could a college president raise before a graduating class?

The curriculum was broadened during his administration to include historical research and case studies of natural phenomena, which met his self-imposed standards of "well attested with credible and sufficient witnesses". "Knowing his broad interest," concludes Professor Murdock in his review of Mather's Harvard administration, "it is not hard for us to guess that the student who thirsted for a taste of astronomy, of chemistry, medicine, or experimentation in 'natural philosophy', got what he sought."<sup>21</sup>

Increase Mather was spared the heavy burden of fund-raising which modern college presidents are compelled to bear-or hired to bear in lieu of distinguished scholarship. Dr. Mather was no "businessman president", but he did interest several influential benefactors, both in England and at home. A notable series of gifts and bequests were made during his presidency.



# Ichabod.

O R

A DISCOURSE,  
Shewing what Cause there is to Fear  
that the

## GLORY

Of the *Lora*, is Departing from  
NEW-ENGLAND.

Delivered in Two S E R M O N S,

By Increase Wather.

*Pfal. 78 60, 61. So that He forsook the Tabernacle  
of Shiloh; the Tent which he placed among  
men: And delivered His Strength into Captivity,  
and his Glory into the Enemies hand.*

*Ezek. 20. 49. Then said I. Ah Lord God, they say of  
you, Dost he not speak Parables?*

Boston, Printed for N. Boone at the  
Sign of the BIBLE. 1729.

While in England he interested Robert Boyle, the scientist, in making a bequest of four hundred pounds for Indian education at the college. Two other English friends gave him 150 pounds for the college. The most fortunate contact he made, as later events were to prove, was with Robert Thorner, a wealthy Puritan of Southampton. He promised Mather in a letter that “I shall not forget that Nursery of Learning and piety”, and true to his word, he willed the college five hundred pounds. But that was only the first fruits from a family tree of benefactors. Thorner’s nephew and executor was Thomas Hollis, a devout Baptist by faith and a successful merchant for forty years, who had the joy of being his own executor and distributing lavish benefactions during his last ten years. He assisted “pious young men who were destined for the ministry”. He took an intense interest in the Harvard library, giving not only money, but supervising the regular shipment of trunks of books. He established Harvard’s first two professorships – one in Divinity (1721) and the other in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy (1727) – to the impressive tune of nearly five thousand pounds.<sup>22</sup> The name of Thomas Hollis is still revered at Harvard University as one of the earliest, wisest and godliest of her benefactors.

The influence which Increase Mather had in loosening the pursestrings of his fellow-New Englanders for the benefit of the college is more difficult to gauge. Gifts that were made or bequests that were written into wills during his presidency bear the distinguished names of Brown and Brattle, Saltonstall, Sprague, and Sewall. Probably he obtained fewer gifts and bequests by personal solicitation than by his public proclamations, in season and out of season, about “the low and languishing state” of the college, its needs and opportunities. Incidentally, the dominant theme of educational fund-raising has not much changed in the past three centuries!

President Josiah Quincy, writing *The History of Harvard University* in the mid-19th century, was not inclined to be overly sympathetic toward the Mathers, Increase and Cotton. Yet he admits that Increase was “well qualified for the office, and conducted himself in it faithfully and laboriously.” He further states that “it was honorable and useful to the institution to have for its head an individual who . . . had acquired both celebrity abroad and influence in his own country.” With regard to the charter issue, Quincy writes that “all his measures to meet the exigency of the occasion were wise and prudent; but, though they saved the state, they caused him loss of popularity and influence.” That century-old appraisal appears to be fair – and also the conclusion that Increase Mather’s administration of Harvard was “the most interesting, the most critical, and the most decisive of its destinies, of any in its history.”<sup>23</sup>

A Discourse  
Concerning the GRACE of  
**Courage,**

WHEREIN

The Nature, Beneficialness, and  
Necessity of that **Virtue** for  
all Christians, is described.

Delivered in a

**SERMON**

Preached at *Boston* in *New-England*.  
*June 5th. 1710.*

By INCREASE MATHER, D.D.

I. Cor. xvi. 13.

*Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith, quit you  
like men, be strong.*

**BOSTON:** Printed by *B. Green,*  
for *Samuel Phillips,* at the Brick  
Shop in Corn hill. 1710.



OLD Dr. Mather", as he was generally known at the turn of the century, continued his prolific writing. From that date until his death, he penned ninety-eight works that were printed, including three posthumously. Nearly a third of these were prefaces or "To the Reader" which introduced the works of others, like T. Prince, J. Wise, J. Sewall – but most often C. Mather! Many of the other works are sermons or series of lectures on a wide range of subjects. Some are moralistic, like *Duty of Parents* and *Excellency of a Public Spirit*. But even more reflect the concerns of his advancing years, like *Meditations on Death*, *Believers Gain by Death*, and *Meditations on the Glory of the Heavenly World*.

Probably his best remembered work of this period – for its title, if nothing else – is *Ichabod*. Its sub-title is a familiar theme: "A Discourse Shewing what Cause there is to Fear that the Glory of the Lord is Departing from New England." (Boston, 1702.) *Ichabod*, delivered in a series of two sermons, bewails "the Declension in the Churches of New England, from what they once were." Their future, to a large degree, is identified with that of Harvard College. (He probably delivered these sermons shortly after his resignation as president, when the memory of the proceeding was still vivid and bitter.) "And if the Fountain shall fail; I mean the Colledge, which has been one of the Glories of New England; if that should fail . . . the Glory is like to be gone from these Churches in less than one Generation."

On an altogether different theme was his *Discourse Concerning the Grace of Courage* (Boston, 1710). It was delivered before the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company. He contended that "one may be a good Souldier and a good Christian", and that there is no incompatibility between "an Eminency in the Carnal Warfare and the Spiritual Warfare." Near the end of an hour-long sermon he remarked: "I am sensible that I have exceeded the Time: but forgive me this once. It is this day five and fourty years ago I spoke in this place on a like occasion" – (when he was 26, and the Artillery Company 27 years old.) He ended on a prophetic note: "There will a time come when there shall be an Universal Peace . . . But that time is not yet come. We know from the Scripture that there are *Wars of the Lord yet to come*."

Increase Mather was a 17th century man, thinker and theologian – although he lived for twenty-three years into the 18th century. His Diary notations indicate that he had two primary desires, which alternated with mood and circumstance in his later years. One was to return to England and the other was to go to heaven. While he did not regard the two goals as synonomous, he longed for eternal bliss if he were denied a call to England's green and pleasant land.

The call never came, though he prayed and waited for it nearly twenty years. He was gratified in 1715 when the ministers of the province invited him to carry an Address to the new Hanoverian king, George I. He declared his willingness to go, but unlike the response of his Church twenty-seven years previously, every member “lifted up his hand against it.” He accepted the decision philosophically: “I am now like to die in N.E., whereas two months ago I was like to die in Eng. My times are in God’s hands . . .”

He was still grieving over the death of his wife, Maria Cotton Mather, who had been “the dear companion of my pilgrimage for more than fifty-two years”, and had borne him three sons and seven daughters. They – particularly his eldest son and colleague, Cotton – gave him joy and satisfaction in his declining years. On the fiftieth anniversary of his ministry in the Old North Church, he submitted his resignation, but the membership would not accept it. They voted that “the labours of the pulpit should be expected of him only when he should find himself able and inclined for them.” He did occasionally preach when he was past eighty – and still without the use of pulpit notes, which had been his life-long custom. He had become a patriarch in his own and other churches of the province, where ordination and installation services were deemed incomplete without his presence.

In old age, he was spared the financial worries of his younger years, and it gave him deep satisfaction to be able to dispense charity rather than receive it. In the year 1712, according to his *Autobiography*, his total income was £ 346-7-6. “I have given this year to pious uses above half of my whole income, comprehending donations as well as my stated salary. Blessed be the name of the Lord, who has enabled me to do it; besides my care of a widowed daughter and fatherless grandchildren”.

At the age of seventy-six he remarried. Again it was an interfamily marriage, for his bride was Ann Cotton, the widow of his nephew John, of Hampton, New Hampshire. She was twenty-four years younger than he, and while she could not take Maria’s place, her care and devotion made easier his last eight years.

Cotton Mather in describing his father’s old age in *Parentator* exclaimed, “How Bright! How Wise! How Strong!” (Notations in Increase’s *Autobiography* sometimes lead us to question that choice of adjectives.) But we might add, *how tolerant*, in comparison with some of his earlier stands. He continued his interest in Congregational and Presbyterian union, hoping to see it in America as well as England. He supported his son Cotton’s brave and enlightened advocacy of small pox inoculation by writing two pamphlets in its defense in 1721. He mellowed in some of his *Ichabod* opinions, for when he was asked in his eighty-fourth year what he thought of the country and its

future, he replied: "The Country has yet such a number of Godly people in it, that God will not utterly cast off this People."<sup>24</sup> Among the Godly he found Baptists as well as Congregationalists. He was "gratefully surprised" when the First Baptist Church in Boston invited him to extend the Right Hand of Fellowship to their new pastor, Elisha Callender, being ordained in 1718, and he "readily consented."

Although he was not invited to take part in Harvard affairs in his old age, he could still rise to the defense of a new generation of scholars when he thought they had been wronged. In a newly discovered letter, acquired by the Houghton Library in 1961, but legibly penned exactly two hundred and fifty years earlier, Increase Mather wrote to Joseph Parsons, accusing him of "talebearing" about two students, "that they sat up all night drinking of Punch and playing at Cards. I believe you have grievously slandered them." He dared to believe the best about a new generation of Harvard scholars!

Another anecdote illustrates his plucky spirit. When he was told that the elder Thomas Hollis, whom he had interested in Harvard benefactions years before in England, had enquired in a letter if he was still in the land of the living, Dr. Mather replied: "No! Tell him I am going to it!"

Like his father a half century earlier, he died of "the Torment of the Stone." His son Samuel wrote imaginatively but not truthlessly when he declared: "Had Dr. Mather ever pray'd to God that he might die a Martyr, he had an Equivalent granted to him; by three weeks racking Pain of the Stone, he suffered more than if he had died at the Stake." On August 23, 1723, he expired in the arms of his eldest son, Cotton.

In an age of expansive, but inexpensive funerals, Increase Mather's was as large and impressive as Boston had ever witnessed. The six pall-bearers included William Dummer, Commander-in-chief and Lieutenant Governor of the Province; Samuel Sewall, the venerable Chief Justice; John Leverett, then president of Harvard College; and three Boston ministers. In the procession, (which *Parentator* describes at length), marched "one hundred and three score Scholars of the College," followed by "a vast number of Spectators", which included "about fifty Ministers . . . all with an uncommon sadness in their Countenance." The procession wended past the Old North Church, where he had begun his ministry sixty-two years previously; past his home with its book-lined study, which had been both shrine and workshop to him; and on to the northwestern slope of Snow Hill. There he was buried beside his first wife, Maria, in the Mather tomb, where later the mortal remains of his son Cotton and grandson Samuel would also rest.

He wrote his will five years before his death.<sup>25</sup> In form and content it resembled his father's last will and testament: a lengthier Testament of faith



than a will regarding disposition of property. (Richard had considerable real estate to bequeath, which Increase did not.) The first order of his will was for the Payment of my Debts, "if I have any; but I bless the Lord I owe no man any Thing but Love." His second order was to give five pounds to the poor of the North Church.

With thoughtfulness and tenderness, he specified how his estate should be dividend among his two living sons, four daughters, and three grandsons. His son Cotton was named as principal beneficiary and sole executor. "If I had any considerable Estate, I ought to bequeath the greatest Part to him. It has bin thot that I have Bags by me, which is a great Mistake: I have not Twenty Pounds in Silver or Bills. But whatever I have (be it more or less) whether in Silver or Bills, I give it to Him, my Eldest Son. Item, I give to him my Pendulum Watch, Item my Pendulum Clock, Item my Silver Tankard: and I bequeath to him all my Manuscripts, and the one half of my Library, desiring that my Books or Manuscripts may not be sold or embezled."

Leaving his son Samuel only a fourth of his library, "in Testimony of Paternal Affection", he justified his action (as his father had done before him) by noting that "I have expended more on his Education than on any one of my children." Furthermore, living in England, "he may furnish himself with a Variety of Books; and is blest with an estate able to do it."

The remainder of the estate "in Housing or Movables", he gave to be equally dividend among his four living daughters – Maria, Elizabeth, Sarah, and Abigail. Of greatest concern to him was the future of Elizabeth's son, Mather Byles, now fatherless. Having "a quick and ready wit", he should be educated for the ministry. "I leave it as my dying Request to his Uncle, my son Cotton Mather, to take care of the Education of that Child as of his own." To this fatherless grandson he left the remaining one-fourth of his library.

Perhaps the most interesting single feature of his will was a codicil he added nearly a year later, regarding the disposition of a slave whom a wealthy parishioner had given him. "My Negro Servant called Spaniard shall not be sold after my Decrease; but I do give him Liberty: Let him then be esteemed a Free Negro."

The provisions of the will displayed the thoughtfulness and sound judgment which had characterized most of his life. The orthodox Puritan testament was highlighted with both humility and certainty. He rejoiced that, in spite of many sins and ills, he had been granted the strength to finish a course of more than eighty years. He testified to the abundant mercy of God throughout his earthly pilgrimage, and in that mercy lay his trust and hope for the future life.

The legacy which Increase Mather left to the present day church, school and state in America defies assessment. His books are no longer read except by a few antiquarians; even his name is unknown except to students of colonial history. Some of the petty controversies in which he fought, with zeal outweighing tact or relevance, can well be forgotten. But the principles, by which he fought all his battles, and the essential rightness of his major causes, deserve to be remembered. Edmund Calamy, who knew him in London, and who wrote the preface to Samuel's *Memoirs* of his father, said that the supreme devotion of his life was to "Practical Godliness, Brotherly Love, and the Peace and Liberties of his native Country." Those ideals can be transmitted and put into a modern mold. But let us not attempt to clothe Increase Mather – the man, the preacher, the charter agent, the college president – in modern dress. It would not become him! He was an impressive figure in the intellectual and spiritual attire of his own age, for he was probably the greatest American-born Puritan of his generation.



MATHER HOUSE, Harvard University, erected 1967-68. Dunster House on the right.



COTTON MATHER: The first American engraving  
in mezzotint, by Peter Pelham (Boston, 1727)





# COTTON MATHER

(1663-1728)



HEN Cotton Mather in his sixtieth year was the most renowned scholar and prolific writer in the American colonies, he was visited by the eighteen-year old Benjamin Franklin, newly returned from Philadelphia to his native Boston. Mather received him in his library, lined with prized family manuscripts and thousands of books in at least seven languages. Although there was a sign above the door, “Be Short”, there is no reason to suspect that he cut his youthful guest short in their conversation. Ben’s interest in books – their writing as well as printing – had already been awakened. As a boy, he had heard both Increase and Cotton preach at the North Church. He had read Cotton’s *Essays to Do Good*, which he later recalled (in a letter to Cotton’s son, Samuel, in 1784), “gave me such a turn of thinking as to have an influence on my conduct through life.”<sup>1</sup>

Leaving the library, his host showed him an exit through a narrow passageway, which had an overhead beam. Presently he heard a shout, “Stoop! Stoop!” – but it was too late. “I did not understand him till I felt my head hit against the beam. He was a man that never missed any occasion of giving instruction, and upon this he said to me: ‘You are young and have the world before you; *Stoop* as you go through it, and you will miss many hard thumps.’”

Franklin never forgot that advice, which his mentor had learned from hard experience. There were critics in Cotton Mather’s generation – and since – who have contended that if only he had stooped more often, he would have saved his head from many painful thumps, and his reputation from several disfiguring bumps.

He did more than stoop; he prostrated himself in frequent prayer and fasting before his God. But on other occasions he failed even to nod in the direction of influential men, turned enemies, who could well have been his friends. His *Diary* tells of many battles against self-pride and a quick temper, which plagued him throughout his career. Yet he was dedicated to the “do

good" principle, and self-spending in its pursuit – at the expense of his health as well as purse. His portrait, painted by Peter Pelham in 1728, shows an aristocratic aloofness of countenance, haloed by the fanciest periwig in provincial Boston. (His wig amused the worldly Yankees, as it irritated the old-school Puritans, who were dwindling in numbers.)

His character had several contradictory traits; his active mind flitted through many variegated changes. There was little in him of the "solid Mather", which had characterized his grandfather and father. His prevailing will to do good had many expressions – some extremely enlightened and constructive; others extremely naive in their conception and diabolical in their effects. Just when we think we can lay a finger on a particular trait of character or course of conduct, and say, 'This is the real Cotton Mather,' we find that it has slipped away. Another one, altogether different and contradictory, has taken its place.

In spite of his literary productiveness and lengthy diaries, Cotton Mather is not self-revealing. It may be a mark of his innate greatness, shared with an even greater man born on February twelfth. Abraham Lincoln was described by a circuit-riding associate in Illinois as "a unique, uneven, and an incomprehensible man."<sup>2</sup> The same adjectives may well describe Cotton Mather. He was unique in his intellectual endowments; he was uneven in disposition and quality of writing; he was incomprehensible to many of his associates, friends as well as enemies. To this day a first-rate biography of him remains to be written. The most we can do in this sketch is to give an outline of his life, try to fit him into the family portraits, and note some of his achievements for which he is worthy of remembrance.

**T**HE eldest of ten children born to Increase and Maria Cotton Mather, he was born in Boston on February 12, 1663. Because both his mother and father were devoted to learning and piety, he was thoroughly trained in those dual Puritan virtues. His formal education began at the "free school in Boston", later named the Boston Latin School, the founding of which had been encouraged by both his grandfathers. His first master was Benjamin Thompson, whom he remembered as a man of wit and classical knowledge. His second, Ezekiel Cheever, made a profound and lasting impression on the boy-prodigy, as upon countless less brilliant students during his seventy years of teaching in New Haven, Ipswich and Boston. When the famous Mr. Cheever died in his ninety-fourth year, Cotton Mather preached his funeral sermon. He voiced the sentiments of three generations of New England youth when he said:

“Do but name *Cheever*, and the echo straight  
Upon that name, *Good Latin* will repeat.”<sup>3</sup>

By the time eleven-year old Cotton had completed his studies in the Boston school, he had (according to his son Samuel) “composed many Latin Exercises, conversed with Tully, Terence, Ovid and Virgil, gone through his *Greek Testament*, and entred upon Isocrates, Homer, and his Hebrew Grammar.”<sup>4</sup>

One may wonder what Harvard College in 1675 had further to teach him! But there were other fields to conquer: “Mastering Hebrew perfectly; digesting Alexand, Richardson’s Tables, which he transcribed; composing Systems of Logic and Physic, which were afterwards used by others, and in a Word, describing the Circle of all the Academical Studies.”

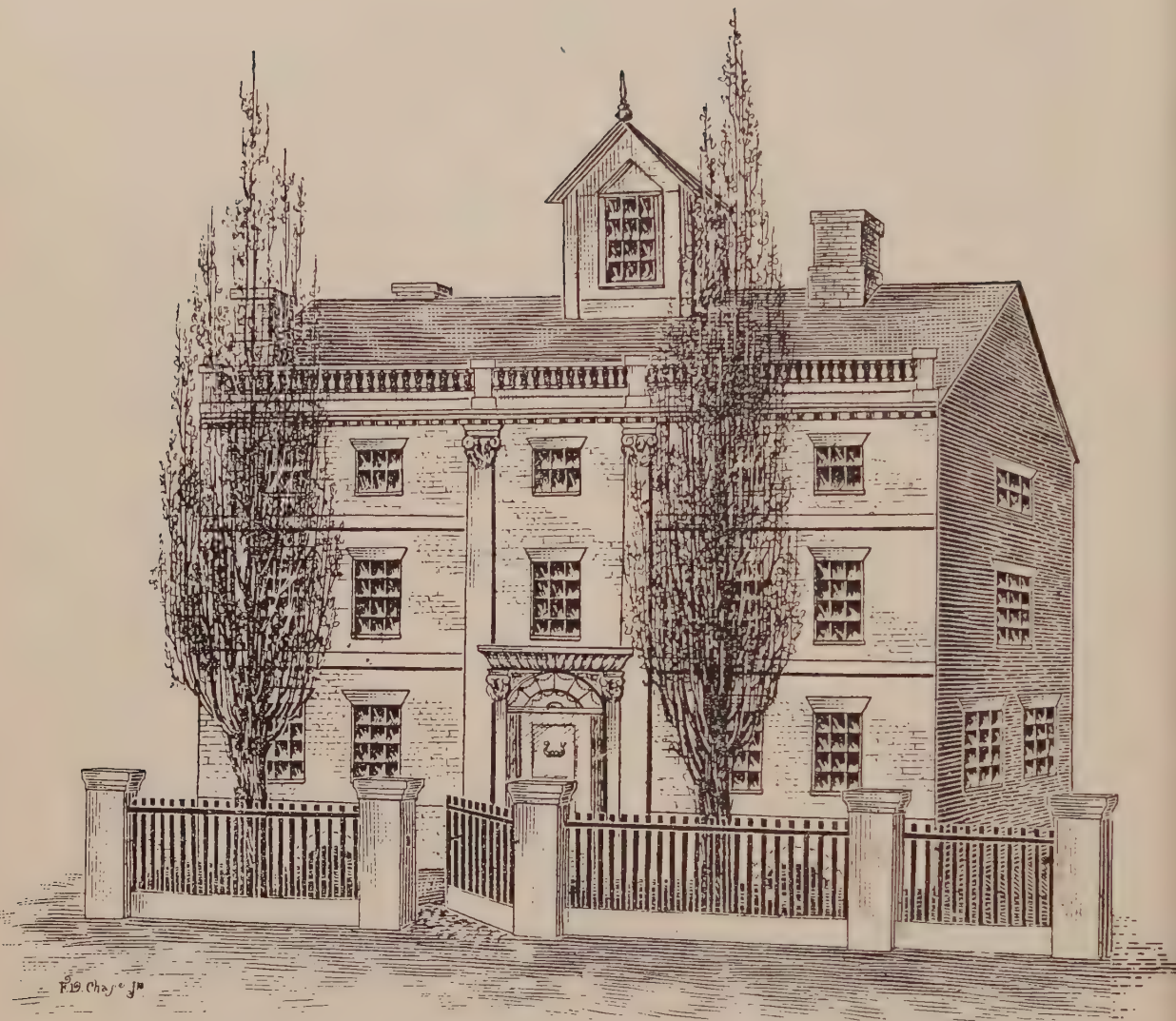
Writing thus, more than fifty years later of his father’s student days at Harvard, Samuel Mather gives no inkling of the hazing the lad endured. This unhappy aspect of his college life we learn from Increase’s *Diary*. On June 22, 1675, he wrote: “This day my Cotton went to live at ye Colledge. The God of all grace be with him.” Less than a month later he was “much hindered by trouble at Cottons being abused by John Cotton [the Third, his cousin and classmate] & some other scholars at ye Colledge.” Finally, on September 6th, at a Harvard Corporation meeting, Increase threatened to resign as a fellow “because I had bin so abused in Cotton.” He took up the matter with acting-president Oakes, who said, “Hee knew nothing of it, but was Troubled when he heard of it.” Oakes was able to smooth the ruffled feelings of his most distinguished fellow, for as they parted Increase assured him that “if it would grieve him, I would not lay down my Fellowship as yet.” That evening, back in Boston again, Increase spoke to the governor about Cotton’s abuse, and he said “it was not to be suffered.”<sup>5</sup>

What form and intensity the hazing took, we can only surmise. The life of a child-prodigy is never easy at best, but when he undertakes to instruct or reform his older, more worldly-wise classmates, he invariably inherits trouble. Add to Cotton’s pious naivete, which led him on his own initiative to compose prayers for his school-fellows use, the fact that he stammered. The lad was indelibly marked for initiation through the third degree.

He survived it all, however, and at the age of sixteen he received his bachelor’s degree, and at the age of eighteen his master’s degree, “at the hand of his Father who was then President.”<sup>6</sup>

It looked for some time as though Cotton’s stammering would preclude his entering the ministry, destined though he was by ancestral genes and celestial portents to do so. “With great application he studied Physic”, which marked the beginning of a life-long interest in medicine and





COTTON MATHER HOUSE

healing. Probably he would have been content with a physician's career and made a notable success of it, except for his father's persistent hope that he become a third-generation minister. Increase wrote in his *Autobiography* under the date of October 17, 1674: "I fasted and prayed before the Lord because of Cotton's impediment in his speech. At the close of the day, I called him and his mother to my study. We prayed together and with many tears bewailed our sinfulness . . . and solemnly gave the child to God upon our knees. I cannot but hope that the Lord has heard."

Doubtless the Lord heard, but the answer came not through bewailing and many tears, which tended to make the boy all the more self-conscious. It came through the wise technique of "that good old School-master Mr. Corlet". He advised Cotton to adopt "a dilated Deliberation in speaking", and pointed out to him that no one stammers in singing. "By prolonging your pronunciation you will get an Habit of speaking without Hesitation."<sup>7</sup> That technique, assiduously practiced with Demosthenean patience, relieved Cotton of his stammering.

**H**E HAD made sufficient progress with his speech therapy so that at the age of eighteen he was ready to preach his first sermon. Reflecting his interest in medicine, he chose to speak on Christ, "the glorious Physician of Souls." There were three churches awaiting the debut of this youngest minister in the Cotton-Mather succession, and he visited them on three consecutive Sundays: his grandfather Mather's church in Dorchester, his father's North Church in Boston, and his grandfather Cotton's First Church in Boston.

The North Church on 23 February 1681, unanimously called him to be an assistant to his father, with no prompting – indeed with reservations – from his father. He was promoted a year later to "pastor", while Increase retained the title of "teacher". Strangely, more than four years passed before Cotton was ordained. (Did he still have doubts that his speech impediment was mastered?) When finally his ordination service was held on May 13, 1685, the Imposed Hands included those of the octogenarian John Eliot, Apostle to the Indians. Cotton could not fail being impressed by this living link – and many invisible ones – with the first generation of the founding fathers.

At the beginning of his ministry, he continued to tutor several scholars, as he had done since the age of seventeen. He taught them Hebrew and Greek, assisted them with catechisms, and directed their declamations. It later pleased him that "several of these young men have proved able and holy Preachers."

The XXIII.<sup>d</sup> Year of my Age.

12<sup>d</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> 1684.

HITHERTO, my God hath helped me.

This Day, I am Twenty Two years old.

Humble me, O Lord, that I have done so little for thee  
all this while!

Oh! How much of my short life is gone, most unaccount-  
ably! Lord, help me now into y<sup>e</sup> Redeeming of  
Paid, and y<sup>e</sup> Spending as much as I can, of it, in a  
perpetual Exercise of Grace!

This Day, is y<sup>e</sup> usual Day of y<sup>e</sup> week, whereon I most  
particularly consider, How may I further glorify God;  
my W.F.S.I.G.N.S., this Day were two.

I. Let me, besides my usual prayers, hereafter spend  
a large Supplication, to God, for myself, and my  
Cock, and my Country, at least Half an Hour,  
between y<sup>e</sup> Hours of Twelve and One, Every Day of  
y<sup>e</sup> week, except y<sup>e</sup> Fifth and y<sup>e</sup> Seventh.

II. Let me spend y<sup>e</sup> whole Afternoon, on y<sup>e</sup> last  
Day of Every week, in peculiar Transactions, be-  
tween, y<sup>e</sup> most High God, & my own Soul.  
Especially Thus.

- Making Three prayers.

The first, as I begin other Afternoons, consisting  
of praises unto God, for His mercies unto me, and  
my Requests on y<sup>e</sup> Behalf of others.

The second, consisting of more personal converse  
with God, in Renewals of Covenant, and Closures  
with y<sup>e</sup> Lord Jesus Christ, and y<sup>e</sup> Spirit.

The third, consisting of petitions, relating to  
y<sup>e</sup> ministerial Capacities whereon I stand; and  
particularly, y<sup>e</sup> Services of this Day ensuing.

2 - Thinking on that Question, What is there that  
I am further to do, for the Name of God?

3. - Meditating on y<sup>e</sup> works of God, and especially on so  
as I am to deliver on y<sup>e</sup> morning.



As he became more and more involved in pastoral duties, he gradually gave up his tutoring. He began a system of pastoral calling, which his father never attempted. He found calling in parishioners' homes laborious and time-consuming, but (said Samuel) "he tho't he never walked more in the Spirit than thus walking to his flock to serve and seek their best interest." He encouraged people to send petitions to him for special prayer or praise. A few have been preserved: "Benjamin Elton bound to Sea desires prayers for him . . . Anne Williams would return thanks to God for hir safe deliverance in child beade . . . Thomas Diamond, returned from see, Desires to Returne thanks to God for his mercies to him."<sup>8</sup> Cotton Mather's concern for all sorts and conditions of men explains, in large part, his popularity among his own people. Moreover, he seldom seemed to doubt that he had an inside track to the Throne of Grace.

Shortly after beginning his pastorate in Boston, he received two invitations (in November 1681 and February, 1682) to become the minister of the First Church of Christ in New Haven. Having not yet observed his nineteenth birthday, he felt highly honored that the church founded by John Davenport in 1639, and flourishing ever since, had seen fit to call him. He was tempted to move to New Haven, as his grandfather Cotton had been, following the Antinomian controversy. After a season of soul-searching, he declined the call, (as explained in his *Diary*) "because the Church of North Boston would have entertained uncomfortable Dissatisfactions at my father if . . . he had any way permitted my Removal from them."<sup>9</sup>

We can see in retrospect, as he could not see at the time, that this was the decisive crossroad in Cotton Mather's life and career. He chose to go the way *of* and *with* his father, ever walking in Increase's shadow, and yet aggressive in fighting his academic, political and ecclesiastical battles. If he had gone to New Haven, he certainly would not have become embroiled in the Salem witchcraft proceedings ten years later. As the senior minister in New Haven, he would have had heavier responsibilities in church and community. In their exercise he might well have developed a better judgment of human nature, including his own. He would likely have had an even larger role than the one he played in the founding of Yale College. Probably he would have assumed its presidency, which later (as we shall see) he could not accept when offered to him.

The road he decided to take had its compensations. He continued to live at the hub of New England affairs – mercantile, cultural, political, religious. From no other center could he gather so readily the historical and biographical materials for his *Magnalia*. At no other place could he become so involved in shaping the course of the colony along the lines of classical

culture and Puritan orthodoxy to which he was dedicated. Whatever the wisdom of his decision, the die was cast. He would remain his father's associate in Boston, which at the time he described as "a populous Place, the Metropolis of the whole English-America, and (here I) may cast the net among much Fish."<sup>10</sup>

ON HIS twenty-fourth birthday he recorded his first interest in "a young Gentlewoman, the Daughter of worthy, pious, and credible Parents in Charlestown." In the margin of his *Diary* he wrote: "ABIGAIL the Happy Daughter of JOHN and KATHARINE PHILIPS." After a brief courtship they were married on May 4, 1686, in the presence of "the Neighboring Ministers and other persons of Qualitie." There was no honeymoon, for they immediately took up residence in Charlestown, and on the following Sabbath he was back in his Boston pulpit to preach on "Divine Delights". After a brief residence in Charlestown, the couple moved to the Boston house in which Cotton had spent his childhood and had "made hundreds of Prayers unto the God of Heaven."

When he had children of his own – and Abigail would bear him nine of his fifteen children – he developed some imaginative techniques for their education. His son Samuel, who could testify from experience, wrote of his father's enlightened manner of teaching: "He began times to entertain them with delightful stories, especially Scriptural ones . . . As soon as possible, he would make the Children learn to Write, and he would employ them in writing out the most instructive and profitable things he could invest for them . . . He would have his children account it a Privilege to be taught, and would sometimes manage the matter so, that Refusing to teach them something should be looked upon as a Punishment . . . The Slavish way of Education, carried on with Raving and Kicking and Scourging (in Schools as well as Families) he thou't the Practice abominable."<sup>11</sup> So had his grandfather Richard many years before in England.

While Cotton was instructing his nephew, Mather Byles, in *Good Lessons for Children*, he admitted that he gave him "a Peece of money for every one of the Lessons he learns without Book." Puritan bribery for a worthy cause! He "entertained" his son Sammy with "the first rudiments of Geography and Astronomy, as well as History", and daily conversed with him in Latin. He taught his daughters to write in shorthand, and when two of them wished to learn French, he readily arranged to have them tutored. Most notably, he instructed his daughter Katharine in medicine, giving her a possible claim to fame – as we shall see in a later section.

While teaching his children he did not neglect his own education. He was a quick and avid reader, blest with a photographic memory. His library at the beginning of his ministry exceeded a thousand volumes, and it was augmented by gifts and purchases through the years until it became the largest in the American colonies. He kept two books of his own in which he regularly wrote during the course of his life. One he called his *Quotidiana*, in which he copied quotations from his readings, and the other was his *Diary*, which Samuel described as “an Account of the most considerable Articles in which he had done his Duty, as well as those in which he had been deficient.”

**O**F HIS four hundred and forty-four extant publications, Cotton Mather’s *Diary* raises the most perplexities in a modern reader’s mind.

It is not a diary so much of day-by-day events – although many are noted – as it is a record of intentions, feelings, and spiritual exercises, some of which were edited and summarized at a later date. There is none of the brevity and little of the spontaneity which characterized Richard’s and Increase’s diaries, fragmentary though they are compared with Cotton’s. He kept it during most of his adult life for forty-three years, (1681-1724), although entries for some fifteen years are intermittently missing.

The “inwardness” of the *Diary* – its self-revelations and self-deprecations – are reminiscent of Augustine’s *Confessions* and Thomas a Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*. All of them tend to repel many modern readers for the same reason: too much lashing of *me*, a miserable wretch, a vile worm. Did their authors hope to impress a later generation with their saintliness through the revelations of their inner torment and self-flagellation?

With regard to Cotton Mather’s *Diary*, we may possibly be reading over his shoulder the most intimate secrets of his troubled life, intended only for his son. The first pages of the *Diary* for 1681 are lost, and consequently there is no inscription, like the one in his father’s *Autobiography*, “To my dear Children.” Much later, under the date of June 16, 1700, Cotton *does* write that “several Customes in my Life . . . may be a little instructive to my Son, if I leave some hint concerning some of them.” Other notations indicate that Samuel’s eyes alone should see this intimate record. He made a limited and indiscriminating use of it in writing his father’s *Life*, but he did not destroy the *Diary*, as perhaps Cotton intended he should.

Since it has long been in the public domain, we shall avail ourselves of some of its entries. The *Diary* gives us a strange psychography, though not an orderly autobiography, of a faithful, fruitful, frustrated man.

As early as his sixteenth year, he had chosen his life’s maxim from which



T H E  
Negro Christianized

An E S S A Y  
T O  
EXCITE and ASSIST  
that GOOD WORK,  
The INSTRUCTION  
O F  
Negro-Servants  
I N  
*Christianity.*

Joh. 24. 15.

*As for me, and my House, we will  
Serve the Lord.*

Pfal. 68. 31.

*Ethiopia shall soon Stretch out her  
Hands unto God.*

Boston, Printed by B. Green. 1706.

he never consciously deviated – namely, “that a Power and Opportunity to do Good not only gives a Right to the Doing of it, but also makes the Doing of it a Duty.”<sup>12</sup>

Hundreds of notations begin with the letters G.D. (Good Devised.) A few representative items are these: “I singled out a number of Students, who were Graduates, and capable; and these mett at my Study in the Forenoon of every Thursday.” (February 6, 1686). “I would show all the Kindness that I can unto the French Refugees arrived in this Countrey.” (January 8, 1687). “It is a Time wherein Funerals are daily celebrated, and multiply among us . . . My visits to the sick do extremely engross my Time and threaten my Health.” (September 15, 1700). “There is an Old Man in the Town, who was a Souldier in the Army of my admirable Cromwel, and actually present in the Battle of Dunbar; He is now come to 88, an honest man and in great Penury. I must releve him and look after him.” (August 3, 1713). “I resolve to unite in bearing the Expenses of a Schole, to be opened every Evening, two or three hours, for the Instruction of poor Negros and Indians, in Reading the Scriptures, and learning the Catechisms.” (March, 1717).

He made it a life-long practice to visit condemned men in prison, and several of them returned the compliment by requesting the privilege of hearing him preach on the last Sunday of their lives. He was equally diligent in his pastoral duties along the wharves of Boston, where he enjoyed talking with seamen and distributing books among them.

In spite of noble motives and sacrificial practices, he was often disappointed with the results of his do-goodism. The worst storm resulting from a well-intentioned word spent its fury on him during his fortieth year. He relates the incident with some compensatory storminess of his own: “There has been an Image of St. Michael carved in this Town, to be sent unto Cape Francois, by one of our Traders thither . . . Whether it be only an ornamental Business, or an Idol to be worshipped by the brutish Papists, I know not. But our people suppose the latter; and a mighty Cry has been made about it. I only spoke a transient and pleasant Word on that Occasion, (distinguishing between an Ornamental Business and an Idol) unto the foolish Woman, who is the wife of the Trader, many months ago. That wretched and brutish Family improved the Word in their own Favour, and made a formal, a lying story out of it. It is incredible what a vile Representation is made of me all the Countrey over.”<sup>13</sup>

In an effort to still the clamor and make plain his own position, he published an essay on idolatry, entitled *Iconoclastes*. It may have renewed the faith of the faithful in him, but it did not restrain the ardor of his enemies in misrepresenting him at every possible turn.

In his efforts to do good, he frequently failed to distinguish between usefulness and meddlesomeness. He was free with advice, whether or not it was sought. He was no less reticent in offering to steer the course of the college, the province, and the churches.

A few entries in his *Diary* within the compass of 1717, a single year, suggest meddlesomeness: "I would put a Friend of mine on doing some services for his Relatives." "Two poor Persons, Objects of my Care, I would endeavor by bringing them into an Intermarriage." "The difficult Case of our New South Church. I have certain Projections, which if prosecuted, may cure all that is amiss." "Our excellent Governour is in danger of some Steps inconvenient for himself and us; nobody will advise him. I must."

That he finally became aware of his reputation as a meddler is indicated in his letter to the Rev. Benjamin Coleman on March 6, 1725. Coleman, one of the six members of the Harvard Corporation, had declined the presidency a few months previously, but he was serving as acting head of the college. Cotton Mather, still smarting from the insult (as he viewed it) in not being called to the presidency, wrote Coleman: "Sir, – No thing that I have mett withal, (and continue to meet withal) causes me to lay aside my zealous concern for the welfare of the Colledge . . . Let me not be thought an Overbusy Intermeddler in affairs which I have been sufficiently forbidden from any meddling with." He then proceeded to offer two suggestions regarding a renewal of the college charter and the revival of days of supplication at Harvard. "'Tis possible," he concluded, "the same Indescretion which attends all my other essays to do Good, may be discerned in this also."<sup>14</sup> It was!

**H**IS passion for serviceableness was not limited to personal advice and man-to-man deeds of mercy. He believed in societies, and launched a number of them. Busy though he was in his study, and mystical though he was by nature, he has little competition for the title of Colonial Organization Man – and in the best sense of the term.

He began early, as we have seen, to organize schools in his own home and neighborhood. He formed a young people's society in his church – probably the first in the country. In 1702, he organized a Society for the Suppression of Disorders, whose members included "about a dozen or fourteen good Men, whereof some are Justices". They met regularly to discuss the status of law and order in the town, as well as means of preventing disorders. The following year, he published a sheet, *Methods and Motives for a Society to Suppress Disorders*, that "every little town may have such a Society in it."



The Society of Peacemakers, which he organized in 1719, sought “to compose and prevent Differences, and divert Law-suits that might arise” – an interest which his great-grandfather, Roland Cotton, had sought to promote a century before in England.

He conceived one of the first – if not *the* first – home-missions program on American soil. Several churches, including his own, raised an *Evangelical Treasury*, “the Design of which was to advance a Fund for bearing the expence of building Churches in destitute places, of distributing Books of Piety, of relieving poor Ministers, &c.” From this modest seed has grown the flourishing home-missions programs of American Protestantism.

His tenure as a commissioner of the Society for Propagation of the Gospel among the Indians was long and distinguished. No aspect of Indian affairs failed to concern him – educating their children, assisting their aged, halting the sale of liquor to them, ransoming white captives from them, saving their immortal souls. Better to communicate with them in their own language, he “conquered Iroquois Indian” at the age of forty-five, and wrote several treatises in that tongue.

Like other Bostonians of his generation, he came into closer and friendlier contact with Negroes than with Indians. The Negro community of Boston numbered at least five hundred during his adulthood. (The first census of 1753 enrolled 989 above the age of eighteen.) Not only did he found and support a school for their children; he met with them, and at their request, drew up *Orders for a Meeting*. The Negro congregation, organized in December, 1693, and subscribing to a written constitution, is doubtless the first church of this formal type to be organized on the North American continent. Incidentally, the author of their constitution was paid a left-handed compliment by impious slave dealers, who named their most obstreperous slaves “Cotton Mather” in his honor.

**F**OLLOWING his father’s example, he naturally had political interests and involvements. At the age of twenty-five, he was left in charge of the North Church while Increase sailed to England on the charter mission. He rejoiced with his fellow-townsmen, (except for a few arch-Tories), when news arrived in Boston that James II had abdicated, and that Prince William had bloodlessly invaded England. The Protestant cause seemed immeasurably brighter.

In Boston and the surrounding country, Governor Andros continued to make himself increasingly unpopular by his imperious airs and tyrannical acts. On the morning of April 18, 1689, the carefully planned and organized

Wussukwhonk  
En Christianeue asuh peantamwae  
**INDIANOg,**

Wahteauwaheonaount  
Teanteagquassinish,  
Nish  
**ENGLISHMANSOG**

Kodtantamwog *Indianog*  
Wahteaunate kah Ussenate,  
En michemohtae Wunniyeunganit.

---

Wussukwhosik nashpe *Cotton Mather,*  
Englishmanne *Nobtompentog,* nampoo-  
hamunate kodtantamoonk *Edward*  
*Bromfield* Englishmanne *Nanawunnuaenuh,*  
noh ukkodaninnumau yeu womoausue  
Magooonk en Indianfut.

---

*M U S H A U W O M U K,*  
Printeuun nashpe *Bartholomew Green,* kah  
*John Allen.* 1700.

The English title on the facing page reads: "An Epistle / to the Christian / INDIANS / Giving them / A Short Account of what the / ENGLISH / Desire to KNOW and to DO / in order to their Happiness." Cotton Mather concluded the Epistle with the assurance: "You shall be blessed with the Lord Jesus Christ, infinitely more years, than you see stars in the Sky, or stones on the Earth, or drops of water in the Rivers."

Several of his publications were translated into the Indian tongue. Unfortunately, no copies of his *Indian Primer* are now extant.

revolt was triggered off. Edward Randolph, the customs collector, and two justices, Bullivant and Foxcroft, (all of whom had tried to prevent Increase's sailing), were arrested and jailed. Members of the former, duly-elected colonial government, led by Simon Bradstreet and John Richards, met at the Townhouse. About noon "The Declaration of the Gentlemen, Merchants, and Inhabitants of Boston" was read from the balcony to the assembled crowd below. The authorship of the Declaration, because of its style and language, as well as its "very quick and sudden composure", has generally been attributed to Cotton Mather.<sup>15</sup>

The Declaration recited the grievances of more than a decade, particularly since "we should first have our Charter Vacated, and the hedge which kept us from the wild Beasts of the field, effectually broken down." The charges against Sir Edmund Andros were that he had issued orders and raised taxes as he pleased. Particularly galling, he had brought "several Companies of Souldiers from Europe, to support what was to be imposed upon us." The Declaration ends with a *fait accompli* statement: "We do therefore seize upon the Persons of those *few Ill Men* which have been (next to our Sins) the grand Authors of our Miseries; resolving to secure them for what Justice, Orders from His Highness, with the English Parliament, shall direct . . ." (The tone and content of this Declaration, it may be noted, is not unlike that of a more famous Declaration written eighty-six years later.)

As to the fate of Andros, he was ordered by the colonial leaders to surrender the government and fortifications, which would be "preserved and disposed according to orders and directions from the Crown of England." He was assured physical safety if he met the terms; otherwise, the fort in which he had secured himself would be stormed. Having been foiled in a plan to escape to an English frigate in the harbor, Andros and his men gave themselves up about nightfall on April 18th. Deprived of his regal plumage, he was led a prisoner through the streets of Boston, and later placed under colonial guard in the fort. The following year he was sent to England for trial, but was immediately released. His political star rose again in 1692, when he was appointed royal governor of Virginia.

Since Cotton Mather's *Diary* is blank for the period from January 1687 to February 1692, we have no account of the Andros affair from his pen. Samuel stressed the role his father played in "reasoning down the Passions of the Populace", who were in a mood to hang Andros and his associates. There was confusion, not only among the people, but among the previously-elected officers of the colony, as to whether or not they should take up the reins of government. A convention of the governor, council, and representatives of the old government met on May 23, 1689. Cotton Mather preached to them



# THE Declaration,

Of the Gentlemen, Merchants, and Inhabitants of BOSTON, and the  
Countrey Adjacent. April 18th. 1689.

§ I. **W**EE have seen more than a decad of years rolled away, since the English World had the Discovery of an horrid *Papist Plot*; wherein the bloody *Devoto's* of Rome had in their Design and Prospekt no less than the extinction of the *Protestant Religion*: which mighty Work they called *the utter subduing of a Pestilent Heresie*: wherein (they said) there never were such hopes of Success since the Death of *Queen Mary* as now in our dayes. And we were of all Men the most insensible, if we should apprehend a Countrey so remarkable for the true Profession and pure Exercise of the Protestant Religion as *New-England* is, wholly unconcerned in the Infamous Plot; to crush and break a Countrey so intirely and signally made up of *Reformed Churches*, and at length to involve it in the miseries of an utter Extirpation: must needs carry even a Super erogation of merit with it, among such as were intoxicated with a Bigotry inspired into them by the great *Scarlet Whore*.

§ II. To get us within the reach of the desolation desired for us, it was no improper thing that we should first have our *Charter* Vated and the hedge which kept us from the wild Beasts of the field effectually broken down. The accomplishment of this was hastned by the unwearied solicitations and slanderous accusations of a man for his *Malice* and *Fals-hood* well known unto us all.

Our *Charter* was with a most injurious pretence (& scarce that) of Law, Condemned before it was possible for us to appear at *Westminster* in the legal defence of it: and without a fair leave to answer for our selves concerning the crimes falsely laid to our charge, we were put under a *President* and *Councill*, without any liberty for an Assembly which the other *American Plantations* have, by a Commission from his *Majesty*.

§ III. The Commission was as *Illegal* for the forme of it, as the way of obtaining it was *Malicious* and *unreasonable*: yet we made no resistance thereunto as wee could easily have done; but chose to give all *Man-kind* a demonstration of our being a people sufficiently dutifull and loyal to our King: and this with yet more Satisfaction because wee took pains to make our selves believe as much as ever we could of the Whedle then offer'd unto us; That his *Majestys* desire was no other then the happy encrease & advance of these *Provinces* by their more immediate dependance on the *Crown of England*. And we were convinced of it by the courses immediately taken to damp and spoyle our *Trade*; wherof decayes and complaints presently filled all th Countrey; while in the mean time neither thee Honour nor the Treasure of the King was at all advanced by this new Model of our Affairs, but a considerable Charge added unto the *Crown*.

§ IV. In little more than half a Year we saw this Commission superseded by another, yet more Absolute and Arbitrary, with which *Sr. Edmond Andros* arrivd as our Governour: who besides his Power, with the Advice and Consent of his Council, to make Laws and raise Taxes as he pleated; had also Authority by himself to Multer and Impley all Persons residing in the Territory as occasion shall serve; and to transfer such Forces to any English Plantation in *America*, as occasion shall require. And several Companies of *Red Coats* were now brought from *Europe*, to support what was to be Imposed upon us, not without repeated Menaces that some hundreds more were intended for us.

§ V. The Government was no sooner in these Hands, but care was taken to load Preferments principally upon such Men as were strangers to, and haters of the People: and every ones Observation hath noted, what Qualifications recommended a Man to publick Offices and Employments, only here and there a *good man* was used, where others could not easily be had.  
the

on “The Way of Prosperity.” It should follow, he said, the way of tolerance, peace, and concord. “We all have our several Schemes of things, and every man counts his own to be the Best; but I would say to every man, Suppose *your* Scheme laid aside, What would you count the *Next Best*? Doubtless we should be of *One Mind* as to *that*: And if we could act by the common measures of Christianity, we should soon be united in it.”<sup>16</sup> Wise counsel it was from a twenty-six year old minister to the governing fathers!

Three days after the convention met, a ship arrived in Boston with orders to the provincial government to proclaim William and Mary sovereigns of England. Puritan Boston threw restraint to the winds. People from the surrounding towns flocked into the capital. Wine flowed freely and spirits were high as they applauded their own provincial companies of infantry and cavalry on parade. The evening resounded with fire-works, military as well as forensic, until the curfew rang at nine o'clock. Pious families then gathered at home to offer their prayers of thanksgiving for the new Protestant sovereigns of England.

Immediately following this celebration, Sir William Phips arrived by ship from London. Having been in frequent association with Increase on the charter mission, he reported to Cotton, as well as to the provincial political leaders, his impressions of recent developments in Whitehall. He was soon off to London again, but returned to Boston in 1692 with Increase, who had nominated him (at William's request and with his approval) to be the first governor under the new provincial charter.

Competent though Increase was to fight his own charter battles, the youthful Cotton – not yet turned thirty – applied his zeal to the defense of his father. “Wee have not our former Charter, but wee have a better”, he proclaimed to friend and foe alike. The verdict of history has asserted him right. But if at the time he had given a more judicious argument to the effect that “it's the best we could get, and better than New York and Virginia have”, he would likely have won more converts. Judiciousness was seldom a major trait, at least in his early manhood.

**S**AMUEL Mather, in the *Life* of his father, termed Cotton's participation in state affairs “a difficult section”, and he confessed that he was “more at a loss what to do about it than any one in the whole book.” He finally decided to devote in that section, a few sentences to the “Witchcraft Confusions” of 1692, and a single brief paragraph to his father's introduction of smallpox inoculation into the American colonies in 1721. A present-day biographer cannot dismiss either involvement so casually. If he avoids the Scylla of stark brevity through this difficult passage, he must be equally vigilant to steer clear of the Charybdis of involute narrative. Several biographers of Cotton Mather have been overtaken by the latter peril, and



Frontispiece of Part II of Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus*, London, 1681



been carried away by their fascination with the witchcraft tragedies. John R. Sibley is a notable example, for he devoted about one-quarter of his sketch of Cotton Mather's life to this subject.<sup>17</sup> Although the Salem drama was composed of several acts and scores of characters, it was only an episode in the first decade of young Cotton's career. More important interests and significant achievements followed during his years of maturity.

To keep the whole picture in focus, we must not overlook the historical background of witchcraft. It dates back to the earliest of human records. At least six examples of witchcraft are given in the Bible, and the punishment ordered is unequivocal: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (Exodus 22:18). The fundamental question from the time of Moses on, however, was what constituted witchcraft, and what tests should be employed to determine the guilt or innocence of an accused person.

There had been sporadic outbreaks of the hysteria throughout the Middle Ages, but none compared with the universal malady which struck Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, and extended even into the 18th. William F. Poole, who wrote the article on witchcraft in the *Memorial History of Boston* concluded that "thirty thousand victims perished in the British Isles, seventy-five thousand in France, one hundred thousand in Germany, and corresponding numbers in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and Sweden."<sup>18</sup> George Lyman Kittredge in his scholarly volume, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, gives more detailed statistics, town by town and county by county. He points out that, whereas the last execution for witchcraft in Massachusetts occurred in 1692, the English and Scottish statutes against it were not repealed until 1736, and a reputed witch, Ruth Osborne, was murdered by a Hertfordshire mob in 1751. "The last execution for witchcraft in Germany took place in 1775. In Spain the last witch was burned in 1781 . . . In Poland two women were burned as late as 1793."<sup>19</sup>

Compared with the unnumbered thousands of witches who were killed during the long delusion that ensnared Britain and the Continent, the nineteen who were executed at Salem during one summer have received a much larger space in public attention and discussion. The reason is not difficult to discern. There is a paucity of European witchcraft literature, written by eye-witnesses or other contemporaries of the delusion. Few trial records were kept, and those few are barren of details. To this day, a European who is interested in 17th century witchcraft turns to American sources – principally to the writings of Increase and Cotton Mather.

Increase, as we have noted, published his *Illustrious Providences* in 1684, which, in rapid succession, appeared in two Boston and two London editions. In the section on witchcraft, he urged caution in the detection and accusation

of those presumed to be in league with the devil. In discussing apparitions, (Chapter 7), he wrote: "Men had need be exceeding wary what credit they give unto, or how they entertain communion with, such specters . . . The rules for judging in this case, described by Malderus, are very fallible." He reserved his strongest condemnation for the "water test" which was prevalent in England, and which King James had approved in his royal *Discourse on Witchcraft*. Increase raised the question "whether it be lawful to bind persons suspected for witches and so cast them into the water . . . so that if they keep above the water, they shall be deemed as confederate with the devil; but if they sink they are to be acquitted from the crime of witchcraft." He concluded, taking issue with his king, that the test was worse than unsporting; it was "fallacious", with "no foundation in nature nor in Scripture."

Of the four witches hanged in Boston between the years 1648 and 1688, the last was Goody Glover, who was charged with bewitching the children of John Goodwin. She was found guilty, and was executed on November 16, 1688. By this time the Mathers, father and son, were much concerned about witchcraft – its nature, detection, and possible cure.

The following year Cotton published his *Memorable Providences*. It recites the tragic story of Goody Glover and the Goodwin children, which is attested in a prefatory note by the ministers of Boston and Charlestown. "Skillful physicians were consulted for their help, and particularly our worthy and prudent friend, Dr. Thomas Oakes, who found himself so affronted by the distempers of the children, that he concluded nothing but hellish witchcraft could be the original of these maladies."<sup>30</sup> Twice Cotton visited the condemned woman in prison, seeking to diagnose her affliction and to give her whatever solace he could. He further went beyond the call of duty by taking the thirteen-year old Martha, the eldest of the Goodwin children, into his home for several months. He and his wife patiently endured her tantrums, all the while treating her with kindness and prayer, and finally pronouncing her cured. There was nothing inflammatory in *Memorable Providences* which would spark a later witch hunt. The primary design of the book was to show how a victim of witchcraft should be treated.

That he succeeded in his treatment of the Goodwin Children was attested by Governor Thomas Hutchinson, writing more than a half century later in his *History*: "The children returned to their ordinary behavior, lived to adult life, and made profession of religion . . . One of them I knew many years after. She had the character of a very sober, virtuous woman, and never made any acknowledgment of fraud in the transaction."<sup>21</sup>

The notorious New England hysteria began in the early weeks of 1692, in the household of Samuel Parris, the minister of Salem Village, (now Danvers). His nine-year old daughter, Elizabeth, his eleven-year old niece, and several neighboring children began acting strangely. They were seized with cramps, spasms, and sporadic spells of paralysis. The village physician, Dr. Griggs, pronounced them bewitched. When a prayer-meeting of their families and neighboring ministers was held in the Parris' home, the children enacted their diabolical drama, but when asked who had cast a spell over them, they refused to answer. After persistent urging, they named three witches: Sarah Good, a miserably poor old woman; Sarah Osborn, having a shady marital reputation, but now mentally disturbed and bedridden; and finally, Tibuta, a half-breed Negro and Indian from the Barbados, who was a servant in the Parris' household.

The opportunity for hushing up the whole affair passed, for on March first, (as the scene was described by J. E. Palfrey,) "in the meeting-house of Salem Village, with great solemnity, and in the presence of a vast crowd, the three accused persons were arraigned before John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin of Salem, members of the Colonial Council".<sup>22</sup> Within the next few weeks, the number of the "bewitched" grew, scores of people were accused of practicing witchcraft, warrants were issued against them, and hearings held. Although no person was sentenced, because Hathorne and Corwin did not have that authority, the jails were crowded with prisoners awaiting trial at a future date.

Cotton Mather described in the *Magnalia* the prevailing hysteria and danger of mob rule: "The country was in a dreadful Ferment, and wise men foresaw a long Train of Dismal and Bloody Consequences. Hereupon they [the Boston ministers] first advised, that the afflicted might be kept asunder in closest privacy; and one particular Person whom I have cause to know, [himself, according to his *Diary*], in pursuance of this Advice, offered himself singly to provide Accomodations for any six of them, that so the Success of more than ordinary Prayer with Fasting might, with Patience, be experienced before any other Course were taken."<sup>23</sup> His offer was not accepted. The afflicted children remained in Salem Village, where they continued to embroil the whole community in fear and hate.

Such was the troubled situation when Increase Mather and Sir William Phips, the newly-appointed governor, arrived from England in Boston on May 14, 1692. Phips acted promptly, but exceeded the bounds of his authority, by appointing a court of nine judges to conduct the Salem trials, which began the first week in June.

An account of the trials does not belong in the Matherian story, for



neither Increase nor Cotton attended any of them. They did not hesitate, however, to give counsel when it was sought. Immediately after the first trial, which sentenced Bridget Bishop to be hanged, the court officially sought the advice of twelve ministers. Why it was not sought earlier, before the first victim was executed, is not known. *The Return of Several Ministers* was composed by Cotton Mather and signed by eleven others in Boston on June fifteenth. It was a brief document of only fifty-four printed lines. While it recommended “the speedy and vigorous Prosecution of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious, according to the Directions given in the Laws of God and the whole Statutes of the English Nation,” most of the document pled for “a very critical and Exquisite Caution.” Article 4 states that “‘tis necessary that all Proceedings thereabout, be managed with exceeding Tenderness towards those that be complained of.” Article 5 warns against “as little as is possible of such Noise, Company, and Openness, as may too hastily expose them that are examined.” Article 6 declares that presumptions and convictions “whereupon persons may be Condemned as guilty of Witchcrafts, ought certainly to be more considerable than barely the Accused Persons being represented by a Spectre unto the Afflicted.” In other words, spectral evidence should not be admitted as legal evidence. If this recommendation of the ministers had been followed, there would probably have been further trials, but no more executions.

The court met for three more sessions, intermittently between June 30th and the last week of September. During that time, some twenty-six persons were tried and sentenced, of whom eighteen were executed. By the end of the summer, the judges themselves – with the possible exception of the chief judge, William Stoughton – were wearied by the whole tragedy. The court recessed, never to meet again.

What were the Mathers doing during this fateful summer? Increase, returning to Boston after a four years' absence, had a full measure of duties awaiting him. But while the Salem trials were going on, he did take the time to prepare a more comprehensive statement than *The Return of Several Ministers* – at their request. He completed his work, *Cases of Conscience*, in the autumn of 1692, while scores of accused persons were still in jail and awaiting trial in Salem. He lashed out more vehemently than he had done eight years previously in *Illustrious Providences* against the admission of spectral evidence into court. “The Word of God”, he prophetically declared, “instructs jurors and judges to proceed upon clear *human* testimony. But the Word nowhere giveth us the least intimation that everyone is a witch, at whose look the bewitched person shall fall into fits . . . The ways of trying witches long used in many nations were invented by the Devil.” What influence this book had in bringing the trials to a close is, of course, debatable.

When Increase wrote his *Autobiography*, he thought that by his publication of *Cases of Conscience*, “many were enlightened, juries convinced, and the shedding of more innocent blood prevented.” At any rate, the trials which were “adjourned” in September until the first Tuesday in November were never resumed, and many prisoners were freed.

Cotton was ill during the early summer of 1692. He wrote to his parishioner, John Richards, one of the judges, shortly before the first trial began: “I am languishing under such an overthrow of my health, the least excess of travel or diet, or anything that may discompose me, would at this time threaten perhaps my life.”<sup>24</sup> With that excuse, he declined the invitation to be present at the opening trial. He was in Salem on August 19th, gathering materials for his *Magnalia* which he was in the process of writing. He would, of course, have talked with a number of people, probably with some of the judges. Whether or not he witnessed any of the five executions that day is unknown. Samuel Sewall, one of the judges, who was in Watertown on August 19th, wrote in his *Diary* (beside a marginal exclamation, *Dolefull Witchcraft!*): “Mr. Mather says they all died by a Righteous Sentence.” Obviously Sewall did not hear him make the statement that day in Salem – if he made it.

Both Sewall and Cotton Mather kept extremely sketchy diaries during the summer of 1692. As a result, many questions about their opinions and feelings, reflecting on their reputations, are forever left unanswered. Probably Sewall was already conscience-stricken over his decisions as a judge, which led him nearly four years later to make public confession of his guilt in a meeting of the Old South Church.<sup>25</sup>

With regard to the trials, Cotton stated in *The Wonders of the Invisible World*: “For my own part, I was not present at any of them, nor had I any personal prejudice at the persons thus brought upon the Stage.” He presumably was recuperating from his illness, writing and publishing books, (eight imprinted in 1692), and carrying on his usual preaching and pastoral schedule.

He even had his own private witchcraft case in Boston! It involved Mercy Short, whose parents had been killed by Indians, and who in 1692 was a maid in a Boston household. After she had told her mistress of several old women who had hexed her, she was sent to Cotton Mather for treatment. He concluded that the women she accused “were doubtless innocent of the crime of witchcraft. It would be a great iniquity for me to judge otherwise; and the world, I hope, neither by my means, nor by her, will ever know who they were.” This he wrote in *Brand Pluck’d Out of the Burning*, a manuscript long lost, and not printed until 1914 in George L. Burr’s *Narratives of the Witchcraft*

*Cases, 1648-1706*. Like other writings of Cotton Mather, its significance has been discovered and assessed only in recent times. "Had we not strenuously suppressed all clamours and rumours", he further wrote in *Brand*, "there might have ensued a most uncomfortable uproar." It did not happen in Boston as in Salem!

While the Mathers, with considerable wisdom and courage, expounded "the Boston method" of dealing with witchcraft, two other writers in 1692 expressed the same point of view. One was Thomas Brattle, a Boston merchant, who became treasurer of Harvard College the following year. He addressed his *Account of Witchcraft in the County of Essex* to an anonymous clergyman, "Reverend Sir", and dated it October 8, 1692. While indicating his belief in the devil and the possibility of devil-possession, Brattle, who had attended some of the Salem trials, condemned their "rude and barbarous methods". He said that although Chief Judge Stoughton and some of the other judges were "very zealous in these proceedings", there were other "men of understanding, judgment and piety that do utterly condemn said proceedings", including Increase Mather. Brattle then related this incident to Increase's credit: "A person from Boston, of no small note, carried up his child to Salem, near twenty miles, that he might consult the afflicted about his child; which accordingly he did; and the afflicted told him that his child was afflicted by Mrs. Cary and Mrs. Obinson. The man returned to Boston, and went forthwith to the justices for a warrant to seize the said Obinson, (the said Cary being out of the way); but the Boston justices saw reason to deny a warrant. The Rev. I.M. of Boston took occasion severely to reprove the said man; asking him whether there was not a God in Boston that he should go to the devil in Salem for advice; warning him very seriously against such naughty practices."

Toward the end of his *Account*, Brattle wrote: "I cannot but think very honorably of the endeavors of a Rev. person in Boston whose good affection to his country in general, and spiritual relation to three of the judges in particular, has made him very solicitous and industrious in this matter." The reference could conceivably be to Samuel Willard or Increase Mather, but since they had been singled out for praise on the previous page, it more likely alludes to Cotton Mather. He was the most "solicitous and industrious" of all the ministers.

Although Brattle's point of view was enlightened and his eye-witness account of the trials informative, he made no move to halt them. He did not take the brave public stand of the Mathers while the hysteria was raging. In fact, Brattle's *Account* was not printed until 1798, more than a century after he wrote it.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, it had no influence in terminating the Salem trials.



A tract expressing the same point of view and written about the same time as Brattle's letter bears the lengthy and unimaginative title, *Some Miscellany Observations On Our Present Debates Respecting Witchcrafts, in a Dialogue Between S. and B.* The dialogue is between Salem and Boston, expressing their divergent points of view. The tract is unsigned, but both Cotton Mather and Robert Calef agreed (for once) in attributing authorship to the Rev. Samuel Willard of the South Church, Boston.<sup>27</sup> In a very limited edition, the tract was printed in Philadelphia in 1692.

A few representative dialogues follow:

- S. "Sir, I understand that you and many others are greatly dissatisfied at the Proceeding among us . . .
- B. Sir, the Peace of a Place is earnestly to be sought, and they that sinfully cause Divisions, will be guilty of all the miserable effect of them . . .
- S. Do you believe that there are any witches?
- B. Yes, no doubt; the Scripture is clear for it . . .
- S. And ought these witches to be Punished?
- B. Without question; the Precept of God's Word is for it; only they must be so proved.
- S. Ought not the Civil Magistrate to use utmost diligence in searching out Witchcraft?
- B. Doubtless: yet ought he to manage the matter with great Prudence and caution, and attend right Rules in the Search."

After long and frequently animated dialogue on the subjects of spectral evidence, confession by the accused, judicial methods of examination – and even an excursion into the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition – Salem and Boston conclude with this exchange:

- S. I see that the differences between us and you are very wide; and I fear the consequence.
- B. God is able to clear up these things, and let us herein agree to seek Him for it, in the ways of His Appointment."

Willard's *Dialogue*, like Brattle's *Account*, exerted no influence in stopping the trials. But written contemporaneously with them, the tract shows the wide divergency of opinion between the Salem judges and the Boston ministers. (This point has often been overlooked, even in C. W. Upham's two-volume work on *Salem Witchcraft*. Upham does not mention Willard's *Dialogue*, nor the Boston vs. Salem methods, well authenticated.) The ministers of the Old North and Old South Churches agreed on all the fundamental points of evidence and procedure.

Cotton Mather made the greatest mistake of his career, so far as his reputation in history would be concerned, at the age of twenty-nine. He agreed to write the account of the Salem trials, or possibly he sought the assignment. On September 20, 1692, as the trials "recessed" never to resume, he wrote Stephen Sewall, clerk of the court and younger brother of Judge Samuel, asking him for "a narrative of the evidences given at the trials."<sup>28</sup>

*The Wonders of the Invisible World :*

Being an Account of the

TRYALS

OF

Several Witches,

Lately Excuted in

NEW-ENGLAND:

And of several remarkable Curiosities therein Occurring:

Together with,

- I. Observations upon the Nature, the Number, and the Operations of the Devils.
- II. A short Narrative of a late outrage committed by a knot of Witches in *Swede-Land*, very much resembling, and so far explaining, that under which *New-England* has laboured.
- III. Some Counsels directing a due Improvement of the Terrible things lately done by the unusual and amazing Range of *Evil-Spirits* in *New-England*.
- IV. A brief Discourse upon those *Temptations* which are the more ordinary Devices of *Satan*.

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By COTTON MATHER.

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Published by the Special Command of his EXCELLENCY the Governour of the Province of the *Massachusetts-Bay* in *New-England*.

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Printed first, at *Boston* in *New-England*; and Reprinted at *London*, for *John Dunton*, at the *Raven* in the *Poultry*. 1693.

Two days later Judge Samuel entertained Cotton in his Boston home, along with Stoughton and Hathorn from Salem. There was, according to Sewall's *Diary*, "speaking about publishing some trials of the witches."<sup>29</sup> Soon afterwards Cotton received "the Special Command of his Excellency the Governor" to undertake the work.

If he had been blest with better judgment, he would have steered clear of the thorny assignment. He had not attended the trials, as had the clerk, the judges, Thomas Brattle, and hundreds of other people. He could have refused the governor's command on the ground that he had no first-hand, eye-witness experience with the trials – but such was not his impulsive, obliging nature. In his letter to Stephen Sewall, he acknowledged, "my own willingness to expose myself unto ye utmost for ye Defense of my Friends." In the work he published, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, he noted the perils of reporting on such a lively subject: "I am far from Insensible . . . that he who becomes an Author at such a time had need be *Fenced with Iron and the Staff of a Spear*."<sup>30</sup>

The province was still embroiled, as he said, with "the unaccountable Forwardness, Asperity, Untreatableness, and Inconsistency of many Persons", some of whom wanted to continue the witch hunt, and others to hang the judges. Cotton took pen in hand, and thereby he became the scapegoat for a guilty and repentant people.

Beginning his book in late September, he gives evidence of great haste in composition, with a pitiful lack of proof-reading and editorial revision. Thomas J. Holmes, the indefatigable bibliographer of Cotton Mather's works, advances the theory that he wrote the first four sections of *Wonders* while waiting for Stephen Sewall's records to arrive. He began by relating a series of "Enchantments Encountred" in New England; he digressed to review the writings of three English theologians on witchcraft. Then, without editorial bridgework, he inserted a Thursday lecture he had recently given on "the Wonders of the Invisible World". He called attention to several works of the devil which had produced a prevailing nervous tension among New Englanders: "A continual Blast upon some of our principal Grain", Desolating Fires, Indian raids, Sea-losses in the French War, and threats of losing English Liberties."

He ended the above section with the words: "I hasten to the main Thing designed for your Entertainment, and that is", (comma). The delivery of the court records had been delayed. But he was not given to idle waiting; he inserted more "filler" that had no relation whatever to the Salem trials.

At this point, he evidently sent what he had written to William Stoughton, the chief judge, for his opinion. Stoughton answered with an



approving letter, which praised the author's "Wisdom and Dexterity in allaying and moderating that among us which needs it." With utter lack of modesty and judgment, he inserted Stoughton's letter in his "Author's Defence", which implied – however erroneously – that he approved of Stoughton's cruel and fanatical conduct of the trials.

At length the court records were delivered to him, and he reviewed five of the trials: those of George Burroughs, Bridget Bishop, Susanna Martin, Elizabeth How, and Martha Carrier. All the reviews of the trials include factual accounts of the indictments, the names and testimonies of the plaintiffs, and the sentences imposed on the accused.

Mather could not have begun the work before September 22nd, and he finished it before October 11th. By the latter date Stoughton and Samuel Sewall had read the copy, and found "the Matters of Fact and Evidence truly reported." The Boston printer, Benjamin Harris, had been provided with installments of the manuscript as it was written; he lost no time in getting the book off the press. Although he post-dated it 1693, a copy of this first Boston edition was sent to London with the "Imprimatur Decemb. 23, 1692." Printers with hot copy could set speed records, even in the days of sailing ships!

The public interest in *The Wonders of the Invisible World* is indicated by the publication of two Boston and one London editions of 1692, and two abridged London editions of 1693. Nine additional editions, some abridged, have since been printed on both sides of the Atlantic.

Faulty though the first editions were in narrative style, arrangement, and typography, the book is of inestimable historical value to those interested in the witchcraft delusion. It is the only systematic contemporary record we have of the Salem trials, since Stephen Sewall's court papers have long since been lost or destroyed. It is also a more extensive record of witchcraft trials than any of the thousands which were conducted in Europe during the course of more than a century. While credit is due Cotton Mather for his diligence in preserving the Salem records, which he feared "might be lost to the world", we can only marvel at the discredit to his reputation which the publication of *Wonders* occasioned. The reporter of the crime has long been adjudged guilty, in popular fancy at least, of its committal. No comment is needed on the unfairness and falsity of such a judgment.

In the years immediately following the Salem trials, people throughout the Province were weary of the whole tragedy – except for a teen-age lad who wrote a series of impudent letters to the Boston ministers, most often to Cotton Mather. Some of them were printed in London, 1700, in a collection entitled *More Wonders of the Invisible World*. The author's name appears as

Robert Calef, and almost nothing is known about him – which is remarkable, considering the stir his book caused in Boston eight years after the Salem trials had ended.<sup>31</sup>

The book, as the title-page declares, was “collected”. By comparison with Calef, Cotton Mather was a master of literary craftsmanship! *More Wonders of the Invisible World* is “Displayed in Five Parts.” Part I is the unauthorized, piratical printing of Cotton Mather’s manuscript account, privately circulated, of the affliction of Margaret Rule, “Another Brand Pluck’d from the Burning”. Part II contains letters Calef wrote to the Boston ministers and the one considerate reply he received from Cotton Mather, who offered him the use of his library for further research. Part III deals with “the Differences between the Inhabitants of Salem-Village, and Mr. Parris, their Minister.” Part IV is a mystifying correspondence of four lengthy, dreary letters between “R.C.” and “a gentleman of Boston.” The anonymous gentleman believes in witchcraft, even as Calef does, but their discussion of it through forty-eight printed pages sets a record for tedious writing (and reading) in the whole of witchcraft literature. Part V purports to be “An Impartial Account of the most Memorable Matters of Fact” regarding the delusion in New England. While this section is the most interesting of Calef’s collections, it is not “impartial”, nor does it deal with “the most memorable matters of fact.” It gives a number of incidental side-lights on the Salem trials and executions, but no systematic report of them. The authenticity of some of the dramatic incidents (such as Cotton Mather on horseback at Burrough’s execution) may well be questioned, in the light of Robert Calef’s tender age at the time they allegedly happened in Salem while he was “rolling hoops or flying kites” in Boston – as well as in the light of a growing folklore during the intervening eight years between the trials and the publication of his book.

Although Cotton’s *Diary* terms Calef’s collection “an abominable Bundle of Lies”, he purchased a copy for his own library. Still preserved by the Massachusetts Historical Society, the book bears this inscription in his own unmistakable handwriting: “Job XXXI: 35, 36. My desire is that mine Adversary had written a Book. I would take it upon my Shoulder, and bind it as a Crown to me. Co: Mather.”

Neither Increase nor Cotton thought it proper to publish a vindication against Calef’s charges, but they were highly pleased when several members of their church took that initiative. *Some Few Remarks upon a Scandalous Book . . . written by one Robert Calef* was printed in Boston in 1701. One of the contributors to the slender volume was John Goodwin, the father of the children who had been afflicted in Boston in 1688. He said that his children had been afflicted for three months before he invited the younger Mather

into his home to pray for them. "He never advised to anything concerning the law or trial of the accused persons," declared Goodwin. "Matters were managed by me in prosecution of the supposed criminal wholly without the advice of any minister or lawyer, or any other person."<sup>32</sup> (Quite a different account from Calef's many accusations and innuendoes regarding Cotton Mather's unflagging zeal in prosecuting witches.)

His own defense, factual in content and restrained in tone, is included in the volume that seven of his parishioners sponsored. "The Name of no one good Person in the World ever came under any Blemish, that I know of, by means of any Afflicted person that fell under my particular care." In answering Calef's charge that he had opposed the action of his parishioner, Governor Phips, in pardoning those still in prison after the trials ended, Cotton said: "All the Ministers then in the Neighborhood will bear witness for me that they know this to be a Falsehood." (Phips himself could not bear witness, for he had died in 1694.) Cotton repeated the offer he had made in the summer of 1692, "to provide Meat, Drink, and Lodging for no less than six of the Afflicted" from Salem Village, in the interests of putting "a period unto the trouble then arising."<sup>33</sup> If his offer had been accepted, it likely would have done just that.

Calef made no printed reply to *Some Few Remarks*, and with that publication the witchcraft literature of seventeen years (1684-1701) came to a tardy conclusion. Reams have been written on the subject since, particularly during the late 19th century, when to writers like S.G. Drake and W.S. Nevins, Calef was a great hero – "a Reformer or Corrector of Opinion", "an influential merchant who wrote a rational account of the events", "the great critic of Mather and the judges." Such encomia do not square with what we know of the man, the contents of his book, and the lack of influence it had on the course of witchcraft, which was already a dead issue in 1700. The leading, if not the only "reformer or corrector of opinion" at the time the hysteria was at its height was Increase Mather. The courageous and enlightened stand he took in his *Cases of Conscience* helped to turn the tide from blood-thirstiness to "exquisite caution."

It has been endlessly debated as to what influence, if any, Cotton's writings prior to 1692 had in sparking the witchcraft trials. As we have seen, he had a consuming interest in the general subject of witchcraft, which he regarded as a disease of the soul, within both an afflicted person and an afflicted community. He was interested in treating the disease, but never in publicly accusing "the witch." His writings in *Memorable Providences* and the two *Brands* may properly be termed case studies, having neither inflammatory intent nor content. There was nothing whatever in *Wonders* which indicated



that he thought the Salem trials should continue. Reporting in October 1692, “a hundred Witches more in Prison, and about two hundred more are Accus’d, some men of great estates in Boston”, he could only rejoice when they were released and the accusations dropped. His error, of course, was that in *Wonders* he permitted his friendship for the “persons” of the judges to take precedence over his criticism of their “principles”, a distinction he had earlier made.

What troubles us is not Cotton Mather’s beliefs and activities regarding witchcraft prior to, during, and immediately following the Salem trials. He was more enlightened than most religious and political leaders of his age and world – including kings and bishops alike. What arouses our curiosity is his attitude in later years toward the tragedy that occurred during the first decade of his career. Did he think he had been over-zealous in trying to cure the devil-possessed? Did he continue to believe in the witchcraft superstition when he was propounding the most advanced of scientific and medical thought – like the Copernican theory, the germ theory of disease, and inoculation against smallpox? Did he ever repent for his lack of wisdom in upholding the Salem judges, while failing to defend the victims? One searches in vain through his writings for an explicit answer. He probably continued to believe in the possibility of witchcraft and devil-possession, as his own “critical and exquisite caution” enlarged its dimensions. Being of brilliant and fleeting mind, having boundless ambition and industriousness, he proceeded to ride off in all direction for new worlds to explore and subdue.

**A** FEW months after the Salem trials had ended, Cotton Mather conceived the idea of writing an ecclesiastical history of New England, which would prove to be his greatest work. In keeping with family precedent, he proposed at a ministers’ meeting that compiling the history be a cooperative enterprise. He was given encouragement by his brother-ministers to proceed, and with the understanding (so he thought) that they would provide much of the copy. But *Magnalia Christi Americana*, as he later entitled the folio volume, did not represent the pooled, anonymous contributions of many writers, as had *The Bay Psalm Book* of 1640. Receiving “not half Ten Considerable Histories” from others, he did the lion’s share of collecting materials and writing the *Magnalia* himself.

Though the monumental work was completed in about two years, he was forced by pastoral duties “to throw by the Work whole months together, and then resume it, but by a stolen hour or two in a day.”

*Magnalia Christi Americana :*  
OR, THE  
**Ecclesiastical History**  
OF  
**NEW-ENGLAND,**  
FROM

Its First Planting in the Year 1620. unto the Year  
of our LORD, 1698.

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In Seven BOOKS.

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- I. Antiquities : In Seven Chapters. With an Appendix.
- II. Containing the Lives of the Governours, and Names of the Magistrates of *New-England* : In Thirteen Chapters. With an Appendix.
- III. The Lives of Sixty Famous Divines, by whose Ministry the Churches of *New-England* have been Planted and Continued.
- IV. An Account of the University of *Cambridge* in *New-England* ; in Two Parts. The First contains the Laws, the Benefactors, and Vicissitudes of *Harvard College* ; with Remarks upon it. The Second Part contains the Lives of some Eminent Persons Educated in it.
- V. Acts and Monuments of the Faith and Order in the Churches of *New-England*, passed in their Synods ; with Historical Remarks upon those Venerable Assemblies ; and a great Variety of Church-Cases occurring, and resolved by the Synods of those Churches : In Four Parts.
- VI. A Faithful Record of many Illustrious, Wonderful Providences, both of Mercies and Judgments, on divers Persons in *New-England* : In Eight Chapters.
- VII. *The Wars of the Lord*. Being an History of the Manifold Afflictions and Disturbances of the Churches in *New-England*, from their Various Adversaries, and the Wonderful Methods and Mercies of God in their Deliverance : In Six Chapters : To which is subjoined, An Appendix of Remarkable Occurrences which *New-England* had in the Wars with the *Indian* Salvages, from the Year 1688, to the Year 1698.

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By the Reverend and Learned COTTON MATHER, M. A.  
And Pastor of the North Church in *Boston*, *New-England*.

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L O N D O N :  
Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, at the Bible and Three  
Crowns in Cheap-side. MDCCII.

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The completed *omnium gatherum* was in seven books, purporting to give the history of New England from 1620 to 1698. The first book of “Antiquities” tells of the planting of the New England colonies. Book II reviews the lives of the several governors, dating from Bradford of Plymouth to Phips of the Massachusetts Province. Book III gives the lives of “Sixty Famous Divines”, while Book IV deals with the founding of Harvard College. “Acts and Monuments of the Faith and Order in the Churches of New England, passed in their Synods” comprises Book V. In the Matherian tradition, there had to be a section on “many Illustrious, Wonderful Providences”, which are recited in Book VI. The final Book, *The Wars of the Lord*, tells of “the Manifold Afflictions and Disturbances of the Churches”, chief of which occurred “in the Wars with the Indian Salvages, from the Year 1688, to the Year 1698.”

Cotton Mather stated his exalted concept of the *Magnalia* in the “General Introduction”, paraphrasing Virgil’s opening lines of the *Aeneid*: “I write the *Wonders* of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, flying from the Deprivations of *Europe* to the *American Strand* . . . I first introduce the *Actors*, that have in a more exemplary manner served these Colonies . . . I add hereunto the Notables of the only Protestant University that ever shone in that Hemisphere of the New World . . .” And so on! The author made clear his intention of writing something more than a literal, prosaic history; instead, his intention was to write an epic in which the Protestant Reformation came to its crowning glory in New England Congregationalism.

He invited one of the founding fathers, John Higginson of Salem, who had witnessed much of the *Magnalia*’s history during his sixty-year ministry, to write an “Attestation” for it. Higginson vouched “for the Substance, End and Scope of it, as far as I have been acquainted therewithall, *According to Truth*.” He signed the Attestation in Salem on March 25, 1697.

The problem of getting the voluminous manuscript published proved to be as arduous – and far more worrisome to its author – than collecting and writing it. No press in New England was capable of printing the folio volume. For nearly two years Cotton Mather prayed that “it bee carried safe to England.”<sup>34</sup> It was not until June 1700 that “a Gentleman [probably Edward Bromfield] just now sailing for England, undertakes the care of it; and by Hand I send it for London.”

He anxiously waited one year and five days before he received word about the fate of the irreplaceable manuscript. He wrote in his *Diary* under the date of June 13, 1701: “This Day I received Letters from London which give me still to see that Faith is no Fancy. My *Church-History* is a bulky thing, of about 250 sheets. The Impression will cost about 600 lb. The Booksellers



in London are cold about it. The Proposals for Subscriptions are of an uncertain and a tedious event.

"But behold, what my Friend Mr. Bromfield writes me from London, March 28, 1701: 'There is one Mr. Robert Hackshaw, a very serious and Godly man, who proposes to print the *Ecclesiastical History of N.E.* which you entrusted me withal. He is willing to print it at his own charge, and give you as many Books (I be leeve) as you desire . . . He declared that he did it not with any Expectation of Gain to himself, but for the Glory of God, and that he might be a Means to midwife so good a Work to the World.'"

The midwifery proved to be of long duration, as the blessed event was again delayed. Since Bromfield had been unsuccessful in arranging terms with a printer, he entrusted the manuscript to John Quick, a Puritan minister in London. In a long letter which Quick wrote to Mather, dated March 19, 1702, he related some of his own troubles in getting the publication under way. He discovered that Hackshaw, the pious "midwife", was also a merchant with "a warehouse of Paper that had long layen on his hands." Hackshaw had been in touch with Thomas Parkhurst, printer and bookseller, who had already printed five books for Cotton Mather. The printer proposed to the paper-merchant that "he will buy ye paper of me, & print it, provided I will take off an hundred books, which I intend to send to N.E. & ye Caribbee Islands, there to be disposed of. And Parkhurst will present Mr. Mather with some books as he thinks fitting, I suppose about Ten."<sup>35</sup>

In his letter reporting this conversation, Quick expressed disappointment, for he had hoped to send Mather "some score of Guineas, or at least an Hundred Books well-bound for your Copy. But what you shall have for your pains and Labour I know not."

More delays, according to the *Diary*, as "one Ship arrives from London after another, and still I am strangely kept in the Dark." At last came the dawn, when he saw the first printed copy of the *Magnalia*, twenty-eight months after he had sent the manuscript to England. Ironically, he could not even claim the copy for his own; it was *lent* to him by a voyager from Newcastle, who had purchased it there before sailing to Boston. But the occasion was significant enough "to sett apart this Day for solemn Thanksgiving unto God."

On its arrival, Mather probably did not take time to read it through, for his wife was on her deathbed, and three of his children were ill with smallpox. Even to hold the calf-bound folio volume, impressive as a pulpit Bible, must have given him renewed courage to face his domestic tragedies.

At a later date he proof-read the *Magnalia*, which the Rev. John Quick had offered to do in London, but had been forbidden by the printer. Mather

compiled two sheets of *Errata*, numbering about two hundred items, which he had printed in Boston, and appended to all the copies he could obtain. In characteristic style, he introduced the *Errata* by saying: "The Holy Bible itself, in some of its Editions, hath been affronted by Scandalous Errors of Press-Work; and in one of them they so printed those words, Psal. 119.161. 'Printers [i.e. Princes] have persecuted me'. The Author of this *Church History* has all the Reason in the World to be patient, tho' his work be depraved with many Errors of the Press Work."

A century after the *Magnalia* appeared, the Rev. John Eliot, great grandson of "the Apostle", published his *Biographical Dictionary of the First Settlers* (Boston, 1809). Eliot, who was one of the ten founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society and its corresponding secretary, could view his biographical subjects with a degree of historical perspective. While he attempted no review nor evaluation of the *Magnalia*, he said of Cotton Mather: "If his judgment had been equal to his imagination and memory, he would have ranked with the first scholars of any age." Of his literary output, Eliot succinctly added: "He wrote too much to write well." That opinion, however, did not restrain Eliot from using the *Magnalia* as his primary source-book, and quoting from it extensively. Other biographers and historians of colonial New England have faced the same dilemma; however much they have disagreed with certain statements in the *Magnalia*, they have not been able to dispense with the book as a whole.

The marvel is not that the encyclopedic volume contains errors, especially when consideration is given to the tribulations which accompanied its collection, writing, and publication. The marvel is that it was written at all! It would not have been if its author had been easily dismayed by frustration and disappointment. A further marvel is that he could write scores of biographical sketches, in a day that was noted for stereotypic eulogy, and make each one personal, anecdotal and colorful. He saw the value, not only of writing the lives of the first settlers while the memory of them was still vivid, but also of collecting "the Acts of the Apostles" before the documents were lost. For these and other reasons, Barrett Wendell, a late 19th century biographer of Cotton Mather, concluded that the *Magnalia* alone "proves him to have been a notable man of letters", and that the book is one of "the great works of English literature in the Seventeenth Century."

With regard to criticism of his literary style, Cotton Mather, like many authors of lesser repute, was singularly sensitive. *Le style c'est l'homme!* He did not answer immediately the critics who lashed him for his excessive use of classical allusions and purple prose in the *Magnalia*. But in another of his notable books, *Manuductio ad Ministerium*, he defended his style by saying:

*Manuductio ad Ministerium.*

# DIRECTIONS

FOR A

# Candidate

OF THE

# MINISTRY.

Whercin, FIRST, a Right FOUNDATION is laid for his Future Improvement;

And, THEN,

RULES are Offered for such a Management of his *Academical & Preparatory* STUDIES ;

And thereupon,

For such a CONDUCT after his APPEARANCE in the World ; as may Render him a SKILFUL and USEFUL MINISTER of the GOSPEL.

*Nunquam meum, Fervante CHRISTO, silebit  
Eloquium ; legant, qui volunt ; qui nolunt,  
abjiciant. Hieronym.*

BOSTON, Printed for Thomas Hancock, and Sold  
at his Shop in Ann-Street, near the Draw-Bridge.

1726.



“There is a way of Writing, wherein the Author endeavors, that the Reader may have something to the Purpose in every Paragraph. There is not only a Vigor sensible in every Sentence, but the Paragraph is embellished with Profitable References, even to something beyond what is directly spoken . . . His Composures are not only a *Cloth of Gold*, but also stuck with many *Jewels*, as the Gown of a Russian Ambassador.”

Having defended his own style, he reminded “a Lazy, Ignorant, Conceited Sett of Authors” that “however Fashion and Humour may prevail, they must not think that the Club at their Coffee-House is All the World . . . The Blades that set up for Criticks – I know not who constituted or commission’d ’em – they appear to me, for the most part, as Contemptible as they are a Supercilious Generation. For indeed, no two of them have the same style; and they are as intollerably Crossgrained and severe in their Censures upon one another as they are upon the rest of Mankind. But while each of them, conceitedly enough, sets up the Standard of Perfection, we are entirely at a loss which Fire to follow.”

With *that* off his chest, he offered a wise and tolerant conclusion: “Every man will have his own Style, which will distinguish him as much as his Gate . . . I would pray that we may learn to treat one another with mutual civilities and condescensions, and handsomely indulge one another in this, as Gentlemen do in other matters.

“I wonder what ails people that they can’t let Cicero write in the style of Cicero, and Seneca write in the (much other!) style of Seneca; and own that both may please in their several Ways.”

Incidentally, *Manuductio* is one of the most readable of his books, for its exposition is simpler and more direct than the *Magnalia*. Written for “a Candidate of the Ministry”, *Manuductio* advocates a broad and catholic study of languages, sciences, poetry, mathematics and history, along with Sacred Scripture and Divinity. Written towards the end of his career, the book represents the distillation of his thought and philosophy. He attains, whether or not be aimed for it, the sound judgment which characterized his grandfather Richard and his father, Increase.

COTTON Mather’s most glaring lack of judgment, apart from his witchcraft involvement, appears in his long associations with his *Alma Mater*. He was unpopular at Harvard as an undergraduate, when as a brilliant, stammering student he undertook the thankless task of raising the standard of piety in the Yard. In 1701, when Increase resigned the presidency under fire, Cotton insulted Judge Samuel Sewall, a member of

the Council, who had made a mild proposal that if Increase returned to Cambridge, he should "read the Scriptures and expound in the Hall," otherwise his return would have little value. Cotton confronted Sewall, according to the latter's *Diary*, and "talked very sharply against me as if I had used his father worse than a Neger." Sewall did not take kindly to the charge, for he had recently expressed his friendliness to Increase by sending him "a Hanch of very good Venison." He particularly resented a brazen youth addressing him in such a manner: "I expostulated with him, I Tim. 5.1. Rebuke not an elder."<sup>37</sup> Such an episode did not win friends and influence elders in behalf of the Mathers' cause.

Cotton was a fellow of Harvard College from 1690 to 1703. In that capacity he did not teach at the college, and rarely attended the fellows' meetings. He did, nevertheless, take an interest in many of the students, and supplied them with countless books—chiefly from his own pen. His most impressive memorial at Harvard today, (the only one!) is the collection of his books, prominently displayed in the rotunda of the Houghton Library, alongside the one and only remaining volume from the Rev. John Harvard's Library. It was saved from the disastrous fire of 1764, because a student had borrowed and kept it without permission.

After Increase's resignation as president, Samuel Willard became acting head of the college, with the title of vice-president. He continued his pastorate in the South Church, Boston, and did not spend as much time in Cambridge as Increase had been inclined to do. In 1703, Cotton had the consolation of a unanimous vote for the presidency from the House of the General Assembly, but his hopes were dashed when a majority of the Harvard Corporation failed to confirm the vote.

It was not until his sixty-second year that he felt his prospects were reasonably bright to win the Harvard presidency. In the meantime, he had been internationally acclaimed as an author; he was the first American-born minister to be awarded an honorary doctorate by a foreign university, (S.T.D., Glasgow, 1710;) and he had been further honored by being elected a fellow of the Royal Society of London. Harvard College had also grown in prestige, and had doubled its enrollment under John Leverett's seventeen-year administration. The plum was all the brighter and riper in 1724.

On March 15th of that year, Cotton complained to his *Diary*: "The Colledge forever putts all possible Marks of Disesteem upon me. If I were the greatest Blockhead that ever came from it, or the greatest Blemish that ever came to it, they could not easily show me more Contempt than they do." Six weeks later, without any warning illness, Leverett died in his sleep. Cotton served as one of the pallbearers, but was not invited to deliver a

eulogy. Immediately after the funeral, he again confided to his *Diary*: “I do not know that the care of the Colledge will now be cast upon me; tho’ I am told, it is what is most generally wished for. If it should, I shall be in Abundance of Distress about it. If it should not, yett I may do many Things for the Good of the Colledge, more quietly and more hopefully than formerly.”

The decision was not his to make, for on August 12th, “the Six men who call themselves the Corporation of the Colledge mett”, and elected the Rev. Joseph Sewall, the youthful minister of the South Church, and son of the Chief Justice. He promptly declined the presidency. The Corporation met again in November, and elected the Rev. Benjamin Coleman, minister of the Brattle Street Church. He also declined. It was not until June 1725, that the Rev. Benjamin Wadsworth, minister of the Old First in Boston, was elected to the presidency. He accepted. By that time Cotton Mather was consoling himself that “the slight and the spite of my six Friends has produced for me an Eternal Deliverance.”

It is often assumed that the bone of contention between the Mathers and the Harvard Corporation lay in the orthodoxy-liberalism issue. Perhaps so, but the issue was not clearly defined. No one was more “liberal” than the Mathers in wanting to see the curriculum expanded to include the latest scientific teachings, those of Copernicus, Boyle and Newton. There is no record that they ever opposed any teaching – theological, philosophical, or scientific – at Harvard. They did not object to what was preached in daily chapel; what they objected to (as did Judge Sewall and others) was the laxity with which chapel was held and conducted. In short, they feared that the college was becoming secular, and they had no hesitation in saying so. There was more of a clash between domineering personalities than between dominant issues – and the Mathers lost the battle to the Harvard Corporation from 1702 on.

Cotton turned his academic attention southward, not alone because he had tasted sour grapes at Harvard, but because “a tender branch” needed his nurturing hand at Saybrook, Connecticut. He had been consulted when the college was organized in 1701 by ten ministers, all Harvard graduates. He had periodically sent books for its library; he had proposed a candidate for the presidency. But when the college was being moved from Saybrook to New Haven, and building funds were needed, he thought of Elihu Yale, the wealthy London merchant, with whom he had previously corresponded and to whom he had sent copies of his books.

Under the date of January 14, 1718, he wrote a complimentary and descriptive letter to Yale in London. He told the old gentlemen that “New



England values itself upon the honor of being your native Country", and that it is "now so far improved as to have the best part of two-hundred Meeting Houses." After stressing the Puritan ideal of stewardship, that we are "no more than trustees of His Goodness", he came to the point of the letter. "The large Edifice" of the college in New Haven "is not yett all paid, nor are there any Funds or Revenues for salaries to the Professors and Instructors of the Society.

"Sir, though you have many felicities in your family, which I pray God will continue and multiply, yett certainly, if what is forming at New Haven might wear the name of *Yale Colledge*, it would be better than a *Name of sons and daughters*. And your magnificence might easily obtain for you such a Commemoration and Perpetuation of your valuable Name, which would indeed be better than an Egyptian Pyramid."<sup>38</sup>

Apparently Yale was sufficiently flattered for he acted with dispatch. He shipped assorted merchandise to Boston, which was auctioned off for 562 pounds, 12 shillings, sterling. The success of the building program for the new college was assured.

Having acted unilaterally, as was his wont, Cotton Mather had some squaring to do with the Connecticut authorities. What if they refused to name the college after its new benefactor? On August 6, 1718, he wrote his kinsman, Governor Gurdon Saltonstall, with whom he was on the friendliest of terms: "'Tis an unspeakable pleasure unto me, that I have been in any measure capable of serving so precious a thing as your Colledge at New Haven." He assured Saltonstall that Elihu Yale had given "sensible proof" of his interest and patronage, but "what he now does is very little in proportion to what he may do, once he finds, by the Name of it, that it may claim an Adoption with him." Then he underscored a belated apology: "*I confess, that it was a great and inexcusable Presumption in me, to make myself so far the Godfather of the Beloved Infant, as to propose a Name for it.*"<sup>39</sup>

He was indeed pardoned; the college was named Yale; Governor Saltonstall expressed a tangible appreciation to Cotton Mather by awarding his son, Samuel, an honorary A.M. from Yale – shortly after the lad had earned his A.B. from Harvard.

Whether or not Cotton was offered the rectorship (presidency) of Yale in 1722 is an interesting speculation. *The New England Courant* in its issue of September 24th reported in the newspaper style of the day: "We hear the Reverend Dr. Cotton Mather has been desir'd to take charge of the College at Newhaven, in the room of the Reverend Mr. Timothy Cutler who has resign'd that Place." The printed rumor was long without known confirmation. The incomplete Yale records do not mention the offer, and

we have no Mather diaries, either from Cotton or Increase, for 1722. Confirmation of the offer awaited the passage of more than two centuries, when Professor Kenneth B. Murdock discovered a letter written in Boston on October 1, 1722. It was a long newsy letter addressed to Stephen Williams, a country parson in Long Meadow, and written by Joseph Green, who had recently graduated from Harvard. He was a cousin of Cotton's and a member of the North Church. He was in a position to know whereof he wrote: "Dr. Mather has an invitation to ye Rector-Ship there [New Haven], but whether he will go we are uncertain, but as to my own part, I am full of hopes that he will not. I believe the Contumelies and unworthy treatment he has mett with in Boston would facilitate his parting with it, but the Church & his good Father will never part with him I hope."

If the call to the Yale rectorship was given him, as seems probable, he declined it with the same regret that early in his career he declined the call of the New Haven church, which had also honored his grandfather Cotton with a call to its ministry. Feeling a deep sense of love and loyalty toward his "Aged Parent", he could not seriously think of leaving the octogenerian Increase alone in the pastorate of the North Church. Whatever his disappointment in being unable to leave Boston, he had the compensating satisfaction of knowing that his efforts in behalf of Yale College were not forgotten, and that his leadership was being sought in the clouded sunset of his career.

Today one can walk through the Cotton Mather Gate, opposite the impressive Founders' Gate of Yale University, and rejoice that *the Godfather of the Beloved Infant* has been suitably memorialized.



An early view of Yale College

**A**N ECUMENICAL thread runs through the Cotton-Mather family story over the course of nearly two centuries. John Cotton, who is believed to have coined the term, Congregationalism, never renounced his affiliation with the Church of England, in which he was ordained and served half his ministry. Increase Mather, as we have seen, was active during his Charter mission in promoting the union of Puritans and Presbyterians in Britain, and hoped for the same union in his native land.

If, in the 17th century, there could have been geographical communication between the Anglican churches of Virginia and the Congregational churches of New England, there could well have been fraternal communion among them. Frontier conditions in both commonwealths did not encourage Romish pomp and ceremony decreed by Archbishop Laud. As Samuel Eliot Morison, himself an Anglo-Catholic, wrote in *The Oxford History of the American People*, (N.Y., 1965, p. 91:) "Although Virginians honored the king and preferred to worship according to the Book of Common Prayer, their churches were conducted in a manner that would have shocked Archbishop Laud, or even a bishop of today. Parts of the liturgy were omitted, the surplice was seldom worn, holy communion was administered to the congregation sitting around a table, Puritan fashion, and there was no altar with candles and cross, which Virginians of that century regarded as faintly idolotrous." The Mathers were like-minded!

Cotton Mather was the most far-visioned and broad-minded ecumenist in the family. He expressed himself on the subject of Christian unity and church union many times, but never more cogently than in a Baptist ordination sermon, delivered in Boston on May 21, 1718.

There had been no love lost between Baptists and Congregationalists since the early days of controversy between Roger Williams and John Cotton. Now it was a young minister, Elisha Callender, presenting himself for Baptist ordination, who sought to heal the breach. He invited the patriarchal Increase to give him the Right Hand of Fellowship, and Cotton to deliver the ordination sermon.

We do not know whether Callender had difficulty in convincing his Baptist brethren of the wisdom of his choices, but we do know there was criticism of the Mathers from some of the Congregational brethren. On the day following the service, Cotton wrote in his *Diary*: "The Exceptions taken against my Action yesterday will oblige me to publish my Sermon to the World."

Published it was, with a winsome Preface by Increase. He admitted he was "gratefully surprised" by the invitation both to him and his son to



participate in the ordination, and that he had “readily consented.” He pled not only for tolerance, but for communion among Christians of “differing sentiments on some particulars.” Then as a valedictory he wrote: “May I, now that I am going out of the World, leave a dying example to those that shall survive me, of a Catholic and Christian Spirit, and of Charitableness to those that may in controverisal and extrafundamental opinions differ from us.”

From a modern ecumenical point of view, Cotton Mather’s sermon, *Brethren Dwelling Together in Unity: The True Basis for an Union among the People of God*, is one of the greatest of his career. It will hold its own alongside other historic and pioneering expressions of ecumenicity. It is worthy of review in some detail.

He took his text from Romans 15:7. “Receive ye one another, as Christ also has received us, unto the Glory of God.” He reviewed briefly the history of the Primitive Church, in which its members “were agreed in the Essential and Substantial points of Christianity, yet had their different perswasions about some Circumstantial and Accidental matters” – for example, the Mosaic ceremonies. The early leaders of the Church did not “exert their Apostolical Authority, and exact a perfect and rigid uniformity . . . O Peter, thy pretended successor in the Church of Rome would soon have done so! But here is not a Word of this. No, the Apostles only say, *Receive* one another, and love and live as Brethren in *Communion* with one another, notwithstanding your Differences.”

Since neither Congregationalists nor Baptists required assent to an historic creed, Cotton Mather proposed that “Christians should unite in Three Grand Maxims of Piety” – which nevertheless were creedal!

1. “The One most High God, who is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, must be my God, and I must make it the main intention of my life to please Him.

2. “A Glorious Christ . . . is the Redeemer of Mankind, unto whose Great Sacrifice I must repair for Acceptance with God.

3. “Out of respect unto God and His Christ, I must heartily love my Neighbor, and forever do unto other men as I must own it reasonable for them to do unto me.”

That Cotton Mather summarized the essentials of the Christian faith, as modern ecumenical leaders understand them, can be verified by comparing his maxims of piety with the creed of the World Council of Churches, which was adopted in New Delhi in December, 1961. The creed, of similar content and length, expresses for the “fellowship of churches”, what the maxims express for “me”, the personal believer.

*BRETHREN dwelling together in  
UNITY.*

The True BASIS for an  
**UNION**

Among the  
*People of G O D,*

Offered and Asserted;

In

**A SERMON**

Preached at the ORDINATION of a  
PASTOR, in the Church of the  
BAPTISTS.

At BOSTON in NEW-ENGLAND.

On 21 d. III m. 1718.

By *COTTON MATHER, D. D.*

With a PREFACE of the Reverend  
**Dr. INCREASE MATHER.**

*Mat. 5 9 Blessed are the PEACE-MAKERS.*

BOSTON: Printed for S. Gerrish in Corn-Hill. 1718.

In his ordination sermon, he returned to his text in order to stress two points. The first was that dialogue – even disputation – should not cease, but it should be kept friendly. “You are to *receive* one another when you seek to reclaim one another; to treat one another as Brethren when you are Antagonists.” The second was that “all who are governed by the Maxims of Piety will be worthy Receivers at the Table of the Lord. Surely, they are worthy to be received unto the Communion Table who will be worthy receivers at it.” (The Mathers had abolished “Closed Communion” at the North Church, and removed the rails that surrounded the Table – quite a liberal advance from the position taken in the *Cambridge Platform* of the founding fathers.

He ended his sermon in the Baptist Church on a personal note and thereby demonstrated how a point of doctrinal difference, deftly handled, could be a means of grace. “While I am so public and earnest an Assertor of Infant Baptism as I am known to be, I am yet verily perswaded the pious Baptist will rejoice to see me doing all I can to bring our People into . . . a sense of the Baptismal Obligations which were in their Early Infancy laid upon them. The Piety we both aim at is the same: *If Infant Baptism were more improved, it would be less Disputed* . . . That we should Love one another, this is, I am very sure, Indisputable.”

This sermon of extraordinary vision and charity has laid buried in the archives for two and a half centuries. It has not been accorded a passing reference by Cotton Mather’s biographers, including his own son. Perhaps it was less noteworthy during the long extended orthodoxy-liberalism controversies than it is in this “ecumenical century.” Within the framework of essential and substantial theology, which allows room for “the extra-fundamental opinions”, Christians of many orders and traditions are learning to converse in dialogue rather than diatribe. There were intimations of this ecumenical dialogue in Boston in the year of our Lord, 1718.

For at least ten years prior to his sermon on *Brethren Dwelling Together in Unity*, Cotton Mather had been interested in German Pietism. He read the works of Jakob Boehme and Johann Arndt, and carried on an extensive correspondence with August Hermann Francke, professor of Greek and theology at the University of Halle. They were kindred souls, inasmuch as they both valued a serious study of the Bible in the original tongues, participation of the laity in church government, and devotional exercises in the universities. Francke maintained a school for orphans in Halle, which was supported by public charity. Although Mather had his own school for Negroes in Boston, he sent several gifts of money and books to the Franckian school in Halle.



A N  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
METHOD and SUCCESS  
OF  
INOCULATING  
THE  
SMALL-P O X,  
IN  
*Boston in New-England.*

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*In a LETTER from a Gentleman there, to  
his Friend in London.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Peele at Lock's-Head in Pater-  
noster Row. M.DCC.XXII.

Through his correspondence with Francke and Anthony William Boehm, he became interested in the Danish mission at Malabar in the East Indies. He was familiar with the work of Bartholomew Ziegenbalgh, “an indefatigable Missionary”, and he not only corresponded with him, but sent him “several peeces of Gold.”

As he came into fuller knowledge of Lutheran piety and missions, he saw that his “grand basis of union” should include Lutherans, as well as Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians. In December 1721, while public furor was raging against him for introducing smallpox inoculation into Boston, he noted in his *Diary* “A Purpose of writing in the Latin tongue, a Discourse about the Union of *Lutherans* and *Calvinists* on the Basis of Piety; and of sending it to the University of Halle in Lower Saxony. Who can tell what may be the Consequences? Assist me, and accept me, O my Savior!”

Whether he was able, in the press of more immediate travails, to write his Latin discourse and post it to Professor Francke, is not known. It is known, however, that his vision bore a measure of fruit two and a half centuries later when the Congregational-Christian Churches (of English descent) united with the Evangelical and Reformed Church (of German descent) to form the United Church of Christ. The ecumenical Cotton Mather gave his celestial blessing to the union! It was at least a step in the direction of his Grand Design.

**T**HROUGHOUT his youth while “reading Physic” and expecting to practice medicine if his stammering could not be mastered, Cotton Mather witnessed the “fiery furnace”, smallpox. Of the six outbreaks – some far worse than others – which struck Boston between 1660 and 1721, none was more graphically described than the epidemic of 1678, when the fifteen-year old Harvard senior wrote his uncle, John Cotton II, in Plymouth: “Never was it such a time in Boston. Boston burying places never filled so fast . . . We did not use to have the bells tolling for burials on a sabbath morning by sunrise; to have 7 buried on a sabbath day night after meeting; to have Coffins crossing each other as they have been carried in the streets; to have I know not how many corpses following each other close at their heels . . . Above 340 have died in Boston since it first assaulted the Place.” The disease had struck the Mather household: “First, my Brother Nath, gently smitten, and I more gently than hee, and my Sr. Sarah more gently than I. But the order is broken on my sister Maria who, on the same day of the month taken very ill; the symptoms grievous, and our fears great.”

Was there nothing that could be done to prevent or cure the dread disease? The problem concerned Cotton Mather throughout his career, and

by the year 1716, he was able to report his findings on “Curiosities of the Small-Pox” to the Royal Society in London. In a letter dated July 12th, he wrote to a fellow-member, John Woodward, and gave him a review of the smallpox outbreaks which had struck New England, as well as the measles epidemic of 1713, which had “devoured” his family. He thanked Woodward for “ye Account which you had from Dr. Timonius, at Constantinople, ye Method of obtaining and procuring ye Small-Pox by *Insition*; which I perceive also by some in my Neighborhood lately come from thence, has been for some time successfully practiced there . . . Many months before I mett with any intimations of treating ye Small-Pox with ye method of Inoculation anywhere in Europe, I had it from a servant of my own, an Account of its being practiced in Africa. Enquiring of my Negro-man Onesimus, [a slave given to him by parishioners in 1707], who is a pretty Intelligent Fellow, whether he had had ye Small-Pox; he answered both *Yes* and *No*; and then told me that he had undergone an Operation, which had given him something of ye Small-Pox, and would forever praiserve him from it . . . He described ye Operation to me, and shew’d me in his Arm ye Scar, which it had left upon him.”

He concluded the letter by asking Woodward: “How does it come to pass that no more is done to bring this Operation into experiment and into Fashion in England? . . . I beseech you, Syr, to move it. For my own part, if I should live to see ye Small-Pox again enter our City, I would immediately procure a Consult of our Physicians to introduce a Practice, which may have so very happy a Tendency. But could we hear that you have done it before us, how much would that embolden us!”<sup>40</sup>

Having befriended the black community in Boston, Mather questioned others besides Onesimus about their smallpox inoculation. He “mett with a considerable Number of these Africans”, learned their methods, and recorded it in their dialect – (probably the first record of their dialect in an American book): “In their Country *grandy-many* dye of Small-Pox, but now they learn this way: People take juice of Small-Pox, and *Cutty-skin*, and putt in a Drop; then by and by a little *Sicky, Sicky*: then very few little things like Small-Pox; and no body dye of it; and no body have Small-Pox any more.”<sup>41</sup>

Contrary to a long-held popular assumption, Cotton Mather did not act impulsively during the outbreak of 1721 on a single shred of information from Constantinople. He had made a study of the inoculation method for more than five years. The opportunity for which he had been preparing came in May 1721, when the man-of-war, *Sea Horse*, brought into Boston Harbor two or three cases of smallpox among her crew. On May 26, he wrote in his *Diary*: “The greivous Calamity of the Small-Pox has now entered the Town. The Practice of conveying and suffering the small-pox by *Inoculation*



has never been used in America, nor indeed in our English Nation. But how many Lives might be saved by it if it were practiced? I will procure a consult of our Physicians and lay the matter before them."

That he followed through on his resolution is attested by Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, who wrote in *An Historical Account of the Small-Pox Innoculated*,: "Dr. Mather, in compassion to the Lives of the People, transcrib'd from the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, the Accounts sent them by Dr. Timinius and Pyllarinus of inoculating the Small-Pox in the *Levant*, and sent them to the Practioners of the Town for their consideration thereon. Upon reading of which I was very well pleased . . . I began the Experiment; and not being able to make it upon my self, (such was my Faith in the Safety and Success of this Method) I chose to make it (for Example sake) upon my own dear child, and two of my Servants."<sup>42</sup>

The young and inexperienced Boylston, who did not receive his Harvard A.B. until 1724, was the only one of Boston's ten physicians to practice inoculation in 1721. About a month after he began the experiment, official opposition appeared. On July 21st, Dr. Lawrence Dalhoude, a Frenchman by birth, appeared before the selectmen of Boston and recited cases he had known (or imagined) in Europe, where inoculation had led to ulcers, frenzy, "Parotidal Tumors" and "Lungs ulcerated".<sup>43</sup>

A more zealous and vituperative opponent of inoculation, and thereby of Mather and Boylston, was William Douglass, an opinionated Scot, who was the only Boston practitioner to have an M.D. degree. He had a hand, if not the leading hand, in drawing up the *Resolve* that was presented to the selectmen: "It appears by numerous Instances that it [inoculation] has prov'd the Death of many Persons soon after the Operation, and brought Distempers upon many others . . . That the natural tendency of infusing such malignant Filth in the Mass of Blood is to corrupt and putrify it . . . That the Operation tends to spread and continue the Infection . . ."

The controversy need not be reviewed in detail, for it involved a considerable number of pamphlets and newspaper articles. James Franklin, elder brother of Benjamin, led the newspaper attack, as Douglass led the physicians' attack. Though the writings on inoculation were fewer than those on witchcraft, the excitement in Boston in 1721 was far more intense than during the Salem trials of 1692. With public opinion decidedly against them, Mather and Boylston advanced shoulder to shoulder in their introduction of the new experiment. Boylston practiced inoculation throughout the summer of 1721 with as much secrecy as possible. But when it came to defending the practice, or winning converts to it through the printed word, Boylston frankly admitted that "writing is a talent which, of all things, I never made

Some ACCOUNT  
Of what is said of  
Inoculating or Transplanting  
THE  
*Small Pox.*

By the Learned  
*Dr. Emanuel Timonius,*  
AND  
*Jacobus Pylarinus.*  
With some Remarks thereon.

To which are added,  
A Few *Quarries* in Answer to the *Scruples*  
of many about the *Lawfulness* of this Method.

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Published  
By Dr. ZABDIEL BOYLSTONE

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B O S T O N : Sold by S. GER  
at his Shop in Corn-Hill. 1 7 2 1

any pretensions to.” He left that to a more experienced hand! In 1721, a pamphlet of twenty-two pages, *Some Account . . . of Inoculating*, was “published” by him. Apart from a few paragraphs written by him in the first person singular, the pamphlet bears the unmistakable style and content, verified by other signed writings, of Cotton Mather.

His *Diary* of August 4, 1721 reads: “I will allow the persecuted Physician to publish my Communications from the Levant, . . . and supply him with some further Armour to conquer the Dragon.” The pamphlet was an outstanding example of the literary and medical collaboration, as well as the mutually generous spirit, which existed between the two men.

For several weeks Cotton Mather faced a weighty decision in his own family: “Full of Distress about *Sammy*; He begs to have his life saved [through] Inoculation . . . Our people, who have Satan remarkable filling their Heads and their Tongues, will go with infinite Prejudices against me and my Ministry, if I should suffer this Operation upon the Child; and be sure, if he should happen to miscarry under it, my Condition would be insupportable. His grandfather advises that I keep the whole Proceeding private.”<sup>44</sup>

The child was inoculated, while Increase in the last year of his life prepared a folio sheet, *Several Reasons* in defense of the practice. Although Sammy recovered after a few days of “ungoverned feavor”, there were other family illnesses. Cotton’s son-in-law was “under an unknown Fever”; three members of his sister’s family had smallpox. His daughter, Abigail, being delivered of a stillborn child, died on September 26th. In the midst of these griefs, he assured his congregation: “I do not sink under any Pressures, but can rise and soar and sing the songs which God our Maker has given His children for whatever Night He will have to be passing over them.”

It was a long night in mid-November when, about three o’clock, a bomb was thrown through his bedroom window by unknown hands. The bomb-fuse was detached as it went through the window, but the note attached to the iron ball was intact and legible: “Cotton Mather, you Dog, Dam you: I’ll inoculate you with this, with a Pox to you.”<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps this near-martyrdom increased public sympathy and support for his cause, although James Franklin continued to attack him and even to parody his writings on inoculation – in issues of the *New England Courant*. When finally the battle smoke cleared, Mather wrote *An Historical Account* and dedicated it to the Princess of Wales. He thanked her for her “superior Judgment and Parental Tenderness” in having her own children inoculated, “and the Success with which it had been attended in your Royal Family is alone sufficient to recommend it to the World.” No greater compliment had



been paid the pioneering efforts of Mather and Boylston – unless it was that William Douglass, M.D., leader of the vitriolic opposition, himself used inoculation in his later practice.

The greatness of Cotton Mather's contribution to the victory over smallpox was a too-well-attested public record for any of his 19th century detractors to ignore or substantially distort. Not, however, his greatness in other fields of medical advance. He himself had a high regard for his principal work on medicine and healing, which he collected and wrote over the course of several years. On February 20, 1724, his *Diary* reads: "My large Work entitled *The Angel of Bethesda* is now finished. If my glorious Lord will accept it, it may prove one of the most useful books . . . I must now apply myself both to Heaven and Earth, to bring on the Publication of it."

In spite of his own efforts, and later those of his son Samuel, the book was not printed – except for a single chapter before the whole book was completed. It is now interesting to speculate, as one reads the manuscript in the American Antiquarian Society Library, *what might have been*. If Mather had reduced the manuscript to half its size, deleted "the Sentiments of Piety" so freely interspersed, and entitled it *A Family Physician*, (as he described it in his "Proposals" to the booksellers), it likely would have been printed and widely distributed. Thereby his enlightened medical theories would have been known and appreciated long before the late 20th century. It was not until 1972 that the complete text was printed, edited by Gordon W. Jones, M.D. (Barre, Mass.)

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes knew of the manuscript, which he examined in Worcester while preparing his lecture on "The Medical Profession in Massachusetts", delivered in 1869, and incorporated into his *Medical Essays*. He devoted five printed pages to ridiculing Mather for his "pedantry and utter want of judgment", for "all sorts of fancies and superstitions", and he concluded that "it is well that the treatise was never printed."<sup>46</sup> With that kind of a recommendation from Holmes, the leading medical writer of his generation, it is understandable why other physicians and historians of medicine did not trouble to read "The Angel" or any other of Mather's writings.

In the present century, however, his contributions to medicine – apart from smallpox inoculation – have been noted and given a new dimension. Dr. William S. Thayer, professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University, read a paper in 1905 on "Cotton Mather's Rules of Health", later published in *Osler and Other Papers*. He contended that "the Reverend Cotton Mather had suffered much from too serious historians who have judged him from a nineteenth century point of view." He too read "The Angel" manuscript, but

unlike Holmes, he found it to be a “Remarkable work”, “a store of hidden treasure”, and “a most interesting treatise.”<sup>47</sup>

Dr. Thayer was impressed with chapter five, (as Holmes had not been!), in which Mather discussed the “Splenic” and “Hysteric” diseases. While hoping that a physician of the future would “discover and encounter them”, he offered the following advice for those having known symptoms of the diseases: “Moderate Abstinence & Convenient Exercise; and some Guard against Injurious Changes of the Weather, with an HOLY AND EASY MIND, will go as far in carrying us . . . to the Promis’d and Pleasant Land, which we are bound unto, as all the Prescriptions with which all the Physicians under Heaven have ever yet obliged us.”

In a later chapter on Exercise, the form he particularly recommended was horseback riding.

But lett the Rider take a care,  
Lest from a-stumbling Horse or Mare  
He don’t take Earth instead of Air!

With regard to “a grievous and fearful Disease, an Appendix to the Cholic, [appendicitis], he humbly acknowledged: “I dare not offer any prescription but *A Wise Physician*. Consult such an one and follow his Directions, relying wholly on ye Blessing of God.”

In Cotton Mather’s “Rules of Health”, incorporated in his *Manuductio Ad Ministerium*, Dr. Thayer found “so much that is wise and quaint and entertaining”. Following are a few excerpts:

“The Grand Secret and Sole Method for Long Life, as so for the Health which will befriend and sweeten it, is to keep the Blood and Juices in a State of due Fluidity. And nothing will do this but keeping to a Spare, Lean, Fluid sort of Diet . . . To feed much on Salt-Meats won’t be for your Safety. Indeed, if less Flesh were eaten, and more of the Vegetable and Farinaceous Food were used, it were better . . .

“I tender you the Advice which the Aged Servant of God gave to his Valued Son, Drink not only Water; but use a little Wine for thy Stomach’s sake. And yet I would say, upon drinking a Glass of Generous Wine, often take a Glass of Water . . . For a frequency in the Use of the Liquors, which they call Spirits, be as afraid of it as you would be of a Familiarity with Evil Spirits.

“Shall I smoke Tobacco? *Answer:* Be sure *not*, if I can help it . . . In the Dutchy of Berguen, People may not smoke without purchasing a License for it. If you were to purchase from me a License for it, I know not how high terms I should hold you to . . .

cap. vii. - epistolical.  
 or, some concluded upon,  
 A New Theory of many Diseases.

Felix qui potius Remum cognoscere causam?

Of a Disease we commonly say to know the  
 cause, is half the cure. But, alas, how little you  
 - go off is there yet made on that Uncertainty: physicians  
 - scarcely talk about the Cause of Disease. But  
 their talk is very conjectural, very uncertain,  
 very inconsistent: and oftentimes a new theory  
 - you, and in it, they are full of contradiction  
 to one another. It may be, one of the  
 friends Maxim you yet advanced by any of the  
 gentlemen, that with that; Umbellus max  
affection of Organi omnium morborum. A distinct  
stomach is the origin of all Disease. A  
 But, yes, whereas it is, that the stomach is  
Disease.

A? now sure,  
 it is as useful  
 a caution as  
 ever was given;  
 & it is the very  
 sum of all wisdom.  
 - philosophical theory.  
 - fact.

— Since we are upon conjectures, I may,  
 as it allow some room, to drop of some  
matter and conjecture.

Every piece of Matter is porous. Every body  
 is surround with inhabitants. The surfaces  
 of Animals are covered with other Animals. You  
 the most solid body, even a marble itself has  
 innumerable cells, which are covered with  
 innumerable insects. As soon as life  
 - the number of these, which the microscope  
 bring to a view, so soon may be innumerable  
 myriads yet smaller than these, which no glass  
 can yet reach: now the Animals that  
 are much more than thousands of times larger  
 than the fundamental of these, have their  
inhabitants; and so, their muscles, their tendons,  
 their nerves, their blood, & the eggs which  
 their propagation is carried on. The eggs of



“An holy and Easy Mind is the most Healthful thing under Heaven: the most potent Prophylactic in all the World. I need say no more.”

The whole body of his *Rules of Health* reveals more than commonsense medical knowledge, uncommon and advanced for his day. (Who else was advocating a “Spare, Lean, Fluid sort of Diet”?) His *Rules of Health*, followed by *Rules of Prudence*, in the *Manuductio*, reveal a wise, witty, learned person, whose erudition has passed from the ornamentally pompous to the simple conversational. It was in his conversation, “more than all his pulpit exercises”, said Benjamin Coleman after his death, that “his wit and fancy, his invention, his quickness of thought, and ready apprehension” were best seen.

For another half-century after Dr. Thayer had found “The Angel of Bethesda” to be a remarkable book, it lay in manuscript – unprinted, and seldom if ever read. Not until 1953 was it edited (with the omission of most of “The Sentiments of Piety”), and printed. It can be said that Cotton Mather, two centuries after his death, was fortunate in having medical historians of the stature of Dr. Otto T. Beall, Jr., and Dr. Richard H. Shryock edit his work. As a professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University and author of *The Development of Modern Medicine*, Dr. Shryock speaks with knowledge and authority when he terms Cotton Mather, “the first significant figure in American medicine.”

Beall and Shryock devote six chapters, beginning with “On the Rediscovery of Cotton Mather”, before giving their “Selected Sections” of the sixty-two chapters of *The Angel*. They doubt, in the light of the *Diary* notations, that Mather “ever practiced medicine in the ordinary sense”, but “he occasionally prescribed for his friends and family – to say nothing of himself.” As a result of his wide reading of scientific journals and correspondence with physicians abroad, he often made recommendations to the Boston practitioners. In 1718, he recommended that they use baths for “some distracted persons” – which as Bealle and Shryock comment, is “a type of therapy still employed for mental illness.”

He became a medical instructor to his daughter, Katharine, that she might have (in the words of his *Diary*) “Knowledge in Physic, and the Preparation and the Dispensation of noble Medicines.” Beall and Shryock think that perhaps Katy Mather in 1711, rather than Elizabeth Blackwell in 1850, was the first American woman seriously to study medicine. She could not long have practiced it, however, for she died in 1716 at the age of twenty-seven. Her father defended the participation of women in the art of healing, and took sharp issue with a crude witticism of that day, “A practicing Rib shall kill more than the Jawbone of an Ass, and a Quacking Delilah than

*PARENTATOR.*  
MEMOIRS  
OF  
REMARKABLES  
IN THE  
L I F E  
AND THE  
D E A T H  
OF THE  
Ever-Memorable  
*Dr. Increase Mather.*

Who Expired, *August 23. 1723.*

2 King. II. 12.  
*My FATHER, my FATHER.*

BOSTON: Printed by *B. Green*, for  
*Nathaniel Belknap*, at the Corner of  
Scarlets-Wharff. 1 7 2 4.

a valiant Sampson.” In contrast to such nonsense, Mather advocated that “our Gentlewomen have their Closetts furnished with several harmless and useful (and especially external) Remedies.” He set before them the example of Agamede in Homer’s *Illiad*:

She that all Simples healing Vertues knew  
And every Herb that drinks the Morning Dew.

The most extraordinary passage in *The Angel of Bethesda* appears in the chapter, “New Theory of Many Diseases.” Apparently as a result of his own observations through a microscope, Mather concluded: “Every part of Matter is peopled. Every green Leaf swarms with Inhabitants. The Surfaces of Animals are covered with other Animals. Yea, the most solid Bodies, even Marble itself, have innumerable Cells, which are crowded with imperceptible Inmates. As there are infinite numbers of these, which the Microscope bring to our view, so there may be inconceivable Myriads yett smaller than these, which no Glasses have yett reach’d unto. The Animals that are much more than thousands of times *less* than the finest Grain of Sand, have their Motions . . . The Eggs of these Insects (and why not the living Insects too!) may insinuate themselves through the Pores of our Skin; and soon get into the Juices of our Bodies . . . Thus may Diseases be convey’d from the Parents unto their Children, before they are born . . . Epidemical and almost universal Coughs may by this Theory also be accounted for.”

If “The Angel” had been published in 1724 when Mather completed it, he would doubtless have been laughed to scorn for his vivid imagination and unbounded credulity. Today, however, he stands (in the Beall-Shryock judgment) as “apparently the only American of the eighteenth century to give serious heed to the animalcular hypothesis”, or the germ theory of disease. This, along with his other observations noted above, gives him a valid claim to the title, “First significant figure in American Medicine.”

*The Angel of Bethesda* may be regarded as the apex of the Mathers’ long interest in scientific subjects, beginning with Increase’s *Illustrious Providences* in 1684. Doubtless Increase read the manuscript of *The Angel* as Cotton prepared it – and doubtless he gave it his benediction.

**I**NCREASE died in late August, 1724, and Cotton promptly wrote his eulogistic *Parentator*. Seldom had such a father-son relationship, with kindred emotional, intellectual, and professional attachments, been more notable. Cotton, although surviving his father by three and a half years, was plagued during that time by illness, debt, and family tragedy.

The last notation in his *Diary* appears on February 7, 1725, and explains why the voluminous record was kept no longer: “When I sit alone in my



# BONIFACIUS.

## AN ESSAY

Upon the GOOD, that is to be  
Devised and Designed,

BY THOSE

Who Desire to Answer the Great END  
of *Life*, and to DO GOOD

While they *Live*.

A BOOK Offered,

First, in General, unto all CHRISTIANS,  
in a PERSONAL Capacity, or in  
a RELATIVE.

Then more Particularly,

Unto MAGISTRATES, unto MINISTERS,  
unto PHYSICIANS, unto LAWYERS,  
unto SCHOLEMASTERS, unto Wealthy  
GENTLEMEN, unto several Sorts of  
OFFICERS, unto CHURCHES, and  
unto all SOCIETIES of a Religious  
Character and Intention. With Humble  
PROPOSALS, of Unexoeptionable  
METHODS, to *Do Good* in the World.

Eph. VI. 18. *Knowing that whatsoever Good thing any  
man does, the same shall be reeptive of the Lord.*

BOSTON in N England: Printed by B. Green, for  
Samuel Gerrish at his Shop in Corn Hill. 1710.

Languishments, unable to write or to read, I often compose little Hymns, agreeable unto my present Circumstances, and sign them unto the Lord . . .

“My glorious Healer, thou restore  
My health and make me whole.  
But this is what I most implore;  
Oh, for an Healed Soul.”

More than once throughout his *Diary*, covering forty-three years of his life, he had addressed himself, “O Miserable Mather.” He had passed through many valleys and stood on many summits – but rarely had he walked the plains. He was either on the heights of exultation or in the depths of melancholy. The signal quality of his character was that the losses and griefs which would drive most men to despair seemed to give him renewed energy, resolve, and hope. For example, November, 1713, was what he called “a month that devoured my family”. A virulent kind of measles struck his household, as well as all of Boston. His second wife, Elizabeth, contracted the measles shortly before giving birth to twins. She died on November 14th. Another black day came on the 21st: “This Day, I attended the Funeral of my two: Eleazar and Martha. Betwixt 9 h. and 10 h. at night, my lovely Jerusha expired. She was two years and about seven months old.”

If, following four deaths in his family within a fortnight, Cotton Mather had sought the solace of others, or even taken a vacation “away from it all”, he would have pursued a well-travelled course. But not he! He increased his pastoral calling; he resolved to set an example of bearing adversity bravely; he increased his charitable distributions among the poor. “The cross is a dry sort of Wood,” he observed, “but yett it proves a *fruitful Tree*; and I shall see much Peace in those Fruits of Righteousness.”

Family troubles continued in the inexorable sequence of the Book of Job. In 1715, having at that time six of his fifteen children left in his household, he married his third wife, Lydia, “the Widow of Mr. George, a worthy Merchant.” Shortly after the marriage, “I celebrated the Favours of Heaven to my Family, especially in the excellent Mother that He hath bestowed upon it.” Later in the margin of the *Diary* he wrote: “*Ah! quam deceptus!*” By the year 1719, his wife’s “prodigious Paroxysms” were making life unbearable for him and his children. He was not sure whether her trouble was “a Distraction” or “a Possession”. Her madness reached a climax on the night of August 13, 1724, when “after a thousand unrepeatable Invectives, compelling me to rise at Midnight . . . she also gott up in a horrid Rage, protesting that she would never live or stay with me . . . She went over to a Neighbor’s House for a Lodging; doubtless with Numberless Lies.”

THE  
*Christian Philosopher :*  
A  
COLLECTION  
OF THE  
Best Discoveries in Nature,  
WITH  
*Religious Improvements.*

---

By COTTON MATHER D. D.  
*And Fellow of the ROYAL SOCIETY.*

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LONDON;  
Printed for EMAN. MATTHEWS, at the Bible in  
Pater-Noster-Row. M. DCC. XXI.



Ardent though his previous efforts had been, he could not now keep the news of his wife's insanity from his congregation. Rather than forsaking or condemning him, as he had feared, they rallied to his support. Several wealthy members assisted him in putting his financial affairs in order, which had been tangled by his unwitting acceptance of debt in the settlement of an estate for his wife's son-in-law. No longer did he need fear that his precious library, numbering now about eight thousand volumes, the largest in colonial America, would have to be sold to pay his debts. His associate in the ministry of the North Church, Joshua Gee, carried many of the pastoral burdens. The membership of the church, which had declined for several years during "the swarming" to a new daughter-church, began to rise again. There is evidence that Cotton Mather in his last few years was held in higher esteem and affection by his congregation than at any other time in his long ministry. Having forsaken the keeping of his *Diary*, he nevertheless wrote and published forty-five compositions during the last three troubled years of his life.

There were joys as well as griefs for him in the family circle. Hannah, his only surviving daughter, decided to become a member of the North Church at the age of thirty. His only surviving son, Samuel, having received "an unripe M.A." from Yale in 1723, and "a ripened M.A." from Harvard in 1725, was ready to follow the family calling. Mather Byles, the favorite "fatherless grandson" of Increase, graduated from Harvard in 1725, thanks to the assistance of his uncle Cotton. He was as yet undecided between journalism and the ministry, but he chose the latter, and thereby shared the Matherian mantle with Samuel through the fourth generation.

During Cotton's last illness, his Flock set aside a day for "humble, poenitent, and earnest Supplication" for the health and prolonged life of "our Rev'd and dear Pastor". Comforted though he must have been by the concern of his parishioners, he was under no illusions. "My last Enemy is come; I would say my last Friend." Two days before he died, Samuel asked him "what Sentence or Word he would have me think on constantly", and he replied, "Remember only that one word *Fructuosus*." (Fruitful). What he said to Mather Byles was more affectionate and paternal. According to Joshua Gee's recollection, he "laid his trembling hands" on his nephew's head and gave him dying blessing: "My dear child, and my son, my son, I bless you . . . You have been acquainted with my poor manner of living, even in the more secret strokes of it: follow what you have found in it, according to the pattern of a glorious Christ."

Samuel informs us that his father died with "a sweet Composure and easy Departure" on February 13, 1728, the day following his sixty-fifth birthday.

AS would be expected, many eulogies were delivered in his memory throughout New England. Some were discriminating – like the eulogy of his friend and younger disciple, Thomas Prince. Having noted the influence of “his learned works and correspondence” in other lands, he added: “But we were every day entertained, surprised, and satisfied, who dwelt in the directer rays, in the more immediate vision.” The editor of *The New England Weekly Journal* termed him “the principal ornament of this country, and the greatest scholar that was ever bred in it.”

His most popular and widely distributed book, *Bonifacius: An Essay Upon the Good*, could hardly be termed “scholarly”. But like his grandfather Cotton’s little book, *Spiritual Milk*, of a former generation, it caught the public fancy. It likely shaped the bent of many other lives besides that of Benjamin Franklin. First entitled *Bonifacius*, and printed in Boston in 1710, it went through at least a score of editions until 1845. The book later entitled *Essays to Do Good*, bore imprints of London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin, New York, Wilmington, Boston, Portsmouth, Dover – and two of Lexington, Kentucky. The *Essays* attained their widest distribution during the first half of the 19th century, as migration to the Western frontier proceeded apace. What influence the *Essays* had on the formative national character and ethic, to say nothing of our present “do-gooder” image, can only be surmised.

During the early 1800s, the young American nation began reviewing and reappraising the lives of its colonial founders. Then it was, as Van Wyck Brooks wrote: “Growing boys and girls rediscovered Mather’s *Magnalia*, wonderful stories about their country that made them feel that the very ground they trod on was consecrated by Providence.” The two American editions of the *Magnalia*, poorly printed and edited though they were in 1820 and 1853, gave evidence of a revival of interest in colonial history. Even now we need an attractive, abbreviated edition of it!

*The Christian Philosopher* (London, 1721) was another of his influential books, particularly in college circles for at least two generations after his death. Sub-titled, “A Collection of the Best Discoveries in Nature, with Religious Improvements”, the book’s theme was that the then-new science magnified Christian faith and revelation. The eleven chapters on astronomical subjects were the first extensive presentation of Newtonian theories by an American author, while the concluding chapters on botanical and biological subjects reported on several colonial American experiments, including the hybridization of both squashes and Indian corn.<sup>48</sup> It was used as a textbook at Yale (if not Harvard!) in the study of natural history. It was – and still is – an exuberant expression of the liberal scientific spirit of the era, which was caught and more fully exemplified by later 18th century writers, like Franklin and Jefferson. *The Christian Philosopher* can profitably be read

today, so far as both text and context are concerned. Its context lies in the stream of a developing science, the best of the age, which Mather introduced to his fellow-countrymen – all for the greater glory of the Creator.

During his lifetime, Cotton Mather sowed many seeds that later developed into the “Flowering of New England.” He not only wrote books; he gave them away with prodigal generosity. In one year alone, according to his *Diary*, he gave away about six hundred books. He gave them not only to the young scholars at Harvard and Yale, but to his own parishioners, to seamen, to prisoners, to Negroes, to people along the wilderness trail to Andover, and in the fishing village of Marblehead. He encouraged the smallest child, like the poorest slave, to read and write. In his view, learning was not only next to godliness; it was a prerequisite to godliness. Learning had its joy and justification apart from its pragmatic uses. New England, as a long-established center of learning, owes more to the example of Cotton Mather than its citizens generally have seen fit to admit.

The “rediscovery” of Cotton Mather is still in full orbit. It was only in recent years, as we have noted, that his unique medical theories and experiments were given their just due. His ecumenical spirit and proposals for church union are now being called to our attention, and brought into focus with the spirit of the times.

What of his Biblical scholarship and his theology? It is known from many of his sermons that he never made a sharp break with Calvinism, but he modified and sweetened it. “*The Marrow of the Gospel*, one of his last printed sermons, testifies to the love of God, through which “the Holy Spirit gives us the *Knowledge* of our *Union* with the Savior.” Calvinism perhaps – but modified in accord with his own mystical experience.

The comprehensive extent of Cotton Mather’s biblical scholarship will not be known until his “*Biblia Americana*” is edited and printed. According to several of his *Diary* notations, he sought repeatedly to have his “greatest work” published in London. It comprises thousands of manuscript pages, filling six folio volumes, and still gathering dust – if such there be – in the stacks of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Mather comments chapter by chapter on the biblical text, and includes a number of long expositions on science, mysticism, health and healing, as they relate to the Scriptures. Perhaps in the not distant future, “*Biblia Americana*” (or an edited condensation of it) will see the light of day, and further illuminate the “re-discovery” of Cotton Mather.



Genesis. — Chap. I.

The World did not exist from all Eternity; by Necessity of Nature; Nor did it, or any Part of it, come into being by chance and Fortune; but all things whatever, whether, Visible or Invisible, Material, or Immaterial were in the beginning created, by the Power of that infinitely wise, Good, and Almighty Being, whom, we call God.

And being now by divine direction to give such a Particular Account of the Creation of our Earth, and of those Parts, that have a special Relation to it, as may be sufficient toward our Religious Acknowledgment of the Great Creator; I observe in general, that its Materials were at first at the time when this Account begins, in a Confus'd, and disorderly State, consisting of an Irregular Mixture of Solids and Fluids thrown together: and were reduced into this Beautiful, order wherein we now behold them, by the Powerfull operations of the Divine Spirit in the following Manner, within the Space of Six Days.

Preparatory to which, the first thing done, was such a Separation of the gross and heavier, from the lighter, and more fine Parts of the Chaos, as might in a good measure prepare the Earth (as in like Manner the rest of the

Planets) for the Reception of Light, from the Sun, and Stars, for the use, and benefits of its inhabitants, and its Warmth to nourish the Plants, and animals it was to be stored withal. And then by Means of regular & proper Motions, to cause a continual Succession of Light, & Darkness upon the several Parts of the Earth. Those Causes and Effects obey'd the Will of the Almighty Creator; who saw them most perfectly to answer the Wise and Good Ends He designed them for: this was the Work of the first Day, and hence is dated the Beginning of our Day and Night.

Within the Space of one Natural Day more, this Separation was brought to such a Degree of Perfection that the main bulk of the heavier Fluids were sunk down toward a Center, while a Considerable Number of their lighter Parts remained suspended above, at some distance from the Earth, in Clouds or Vapours kept up there, and continually supplied by Exhalations from the Waters of the Earth; So that there appeared between these Clouds above, and the great Collections of Waters below, a free, lightsome, and open Space, stretch'd, as it were over the whole Surface, and this is what we call, the Firmament, or Air or Atmosphere, or Heaven.



*Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society*

SAMUEL MATHER (1706-1785) Oil portrait by John Greenwood (Boston, c.1750)



# SAMUEL MATHER

(1706-1785)



N 1699, and for several years following the birth of his eldest son Increase, Cotton Mather expected that the ministerial mantle of the fourth generation would fall unspotted on "Creasy's" shoulders. His *Diary* tells of high hopes he had for the lad, and the patient, enlightened methods he used in efforts to arouse his son's intellectual curiosity and spiritual concern. Bright though Creasy was, he reacted early against the learning and piety of his family. His grandfather, Increase, having recently retired from the presidency of Harvard College, consented to tutor his namesake, but without salutary results. On one occasion, at least, Creasy was busy at play and showed up late for his lesson; whereupon his grandfather refused to see him.<sup>1</sup> The boy was probably delighted, for he saw no sense in the Matherian doctrine that "learning is a privilege." As he grew older, he took up with gutter companions; he was accused by a harlot of the paternity of her child; he was arrested for night rioting in the streets of Boston.<sup>2</sup> After "more snares" and "new distresses," which his father did not specify, "the incorrigible prodigal" was lost at sea in his twenty-fifth year. Cotton Mather repeated the anguished cry of King David, another forgiving father: "My son! my son!"

"Little Sammy," (as the *Diary* often refers to him,) was born on October 30, 1706, the son of Abigail Phillips, second wife of Cotton Mather. "Little Sammy" he would remain throughout his lifetime of seventy-nine years, dwarfed by the giant reputations and accomplishments of his father, grandfather, and great grandfathers. If perchance he had not borne the Mather name, he surely would have fared better with his contemporaries, and with later biographers and historians. For, in his generation "no man in New England was probably as learned as he,"<sup>3</sup> and few patriots took a saner course than he throughout the troubled era preceeding, during, and following the American Revolution.

That we may deal more fully with this later, significant period of his career, we shall omit details, (plenty of which are available in the Mather



records!) regarding his personal, academic, and professional life. Following is a brief outline:

He graduated from Harvard College in the class of 1723. Through the initiative of his father and the insistence of Governor Gurdon Saltonstall, he was awarded “an unripe M.A.” by Yale when he was seventeen. Two years later he received his “ripened M.A.” at the Harvard commencement.<sup>4</sup>

Following the death of Cotton Mather in 1728, Joshua Gee was the sole minister of the Old North (Second) Church in Boston. After a four-year search and considerable disagreement about candidates, the Church narrowed the field to Samuel Mather and his cousin, Mather Byles. Samuel won the appointment, but not with the unanimous approval of the congregation. He was ordained on June 21, 1732, and thus continued the Mather ministry in the Old North, which already extended through four score years.

A year after his ordination Samuel married Hannah Hutchinson, daughter of the elder Thomas Hutchinson, a leading merchant of Boston, and a member of the North Church. The couple bought a house near North Square, on Moon Street, where they lived for more than fifty years during the rest of their lives.

Samuel from earliest childhood appears to have been easy-going and irenic by nature, which inclined some of his parishioners to charge him with “theological laxity.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, he did not hew the straight and narrow line of *Cambridge Platform* doctrine, as did his father and grandfather – but neither was he the powerful and persuasive preacher each of them had been. Opposition against him mounted within the congregation, with no help given him by his senior associate, Mr. Gee. The latter, in fact, added fuel to the flames. After a ten-year tenure in the pulpit of his fathers, Samuel Mather (by a vote of 41 to 34) was relieved of his pastorate. As a sop, he was granted an additional year’s salary.

Following his dismissal, thirty men and sixty-three women withdrew their membership from the North Church. Later they sent a letter to the officials of the church offering to return, but their offer was not thought to be “consistent with the peace and edification of the Church.”<sup>6</sup> Whereupon, with high hope and amazing speed, they built a new edifice at the corner of Hanover and North Bennett streets, to be known as the Bennett Street Church. Reporting the first service in the new meeting-house of “those Brethren of the North Church and Congregation, who, from a conscientious dislike of the treatment of the Rev. Mr. Mather, their honored and beloved Pastor,” the *Boston Evening Post* of 14 June 1742 continued: “It is very observable that these good People received the Timber for their Frame but

THE  
L I F E

OF THE

Very REVEREND and LEARNED

*COTTON MATHER,*

D. D. & F. R. S.

Late Pastor of the *North Church* in *B O S T O N.*

Who Died, *Feb. 13. 1727, 8.*

---

By *SAMUEL MATHER, M.A.*

---

*Mal. 1. 6. --- A Son honoreth his Father.*

ΝΗΠΙΟΣ ΟΣ ΤΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΟΙΚΤΡΩΣ  
ΟΙΧΟΜΗΝΩΝ ΓΟΝΕΩΝ ΕΠΙΛΑΘΕΤΑΙ.  
*SOPHOC. Electra.*

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*Boston, New-England:*  
Printed for *SAMUEL GERRISH, in Cornhill.*

*MDCCXXIX.*

Seven Weeks ago, and within Four Weeks had it raised. And, as they are now got into their new Meeting-House, they hope long and peaceably to enjoy in it the Benefit of their Pastor's publick Labours."

**L**ONG his labors would be – another forty-three years – but not always peaceable. He, like every other New England minister, had to come to terms with the revivalism of the "Great Awakening," led by Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. Samuel Mather was opposed to it on the same grounds his father and grandfather had taken against itinerant, emotional, irresponsible preaching – namely, that it failed to meet the dignified, intellectual, and responsible standards that an Ordinance of God should have. Samuel made no direct attacks on Edwards or Whitefield or any other "New Lights," but he invited none of them into his pulpit. He expressed his thoughts freely to several European correspondents, including Isaac Watts, who interpreted Mather's position as follows: "He seems to think there is nothing in it but flocking after sermons, pathetick efforts of mechanick zeal, and a great deal of religious talk, etc., but he declares roundly that the occasion of this great talk has been that some pious persons have been notoriously impos'd upon & deceived."<sup>7</sup> In the reaction against revivalism which followed Whitefield's barnstorming tours, both Harvard and Yale officialdom "testified and declared" against him.<sup>8</sup> Mather's sentiments were then held in higher esteem by New Englanders than when he earlier expressed them to Watts.

During the troubled times and provocative events which preceeded the American Revolution, Samuel Mather was not immune from soul-searching and hard thinking. He had no illusions about "what Debaucheries, what Thefts and Rapines" accompany war. "And besides; War is always very chargeable: And, supposing the War should terminate with Success and Triumph; yet there is scarce any War so happily concluded but that, upon the Review, it will be found the Loss sustained is equal to the Benefit and Advantage accruing to the Victor."<sup>9</sup>

Following the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, Mather clearly foresaw the consequences. His sentiments paralleled those of his father and grandfather during the charter crisis of 1688. In a letter to his son on 17 August 1765, he said of the Stamp Act that it was "a most unadvised Thing to attempt the Imposition of such a Burden," and that "it necessarily occasions an Alienation from the Mother Country."

Nine days after he wrote the letter, a mob of vandals broke into the mansion of his brother-in-law, Governor Thomas Hutchinson, who was committed to the enforcement of the Stamp Act. Hutchinson and his eldest



A N  
ATTEMPT TO SHEW,  
THAT AMERICA MUST BE KNOWN TO THE  
ANCIENTS;  
MADE AT THE REQUEST, AND TO GRATIFY THE CURIOSITY, OF  
AN INQUISITIVE GENTLEMAN:  
TO WHICH IS ADDED  
An APPENDIX,  
CONCERNING THE AMERICAN COLONIES,  
AND SOME  
MODERN MANAGEMENTS AGAINST  
THEM.

By an AMERICAN ENGLISHMAN.  
PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND.

Nescio quomodo plerique errare malunt; Eamque Sententiam,  
quam adamaverunt, pugnacissimè defendere, quam sine Pertinacia,  
quid constantissime dicatur, exquirere.

CICERON. *Academic. Quæst. lib. 2.*

Sed nec preteritis hæc res incognita Seclis.

CLAUDIAN. *De Bello Getico.*

Nihil tam difficile quin quærendo investigari possit.

TERENT. *in Heauton. Act 4. Scen 2.*

BOSTON NEW-ENGLAND:

Printed by J. KNEELAND, in Milk-Street, for T. LEVERETT,  
and H. KNOX, in Cornhill.

MDCCLXXIII.

daughter escaped to the Mather parsonage, while throughout the night of 26 August 1765, the mob despoiled his home with axes, chopped down the trees of his garden, and stole 900 pounds of his money. Their most wanton act was casting his library of precious historical documents, including the manuscript for his second volume of *The History of Massachusetts Bay*, into the muddy street. Fortunately, some of the books and papers were recovered the next day by his friend and neighbor, the Rev. John Eliot II. The August mud of 1765 can still be seen on some of the pages!<sup>10</sup>

It was natural and praiseworthy that, in letters to his son, Samuel Mather should denounce the vandalism of the Stamp Act mob as “very rough and out-rageous,” and deplore “Mr. Otis’s wild and abusive Reflections” on Governor Hutchinson.

**I**N the relative calm interval between the repeal of the Stamp Act and the outbreak of hostilities, Mather wrote an interesting and scholarly tract entitled *America Known to the Ancients*. He went back to Plato, Seneca, Strabo and Pliny for “repeated mention of two Islands called Atlantides,” which possibly could have provided navigational links between Europe and America. He recalled the incident of Metellus Celer, Roman proconsul in Gaul, receiving “a present of certain Indians from the King of Seuvians . . . It seems probable that these Indians might be carried away from the coast of Labrador.”<sup>11</sup> With patriotic feeling moulded in the Puritan tradition, he wrote in an accompanying tract: “These Parts of the World seem to have been designed of Heaven for an Asylum, a Place of Rest and Refreshment to those who have been oppressed and groaning under the Tyranny of Political and Ecclesiastical Power.”<sup>12</sup>

Benjamin Franklin read these tracts in London, and wrote a long letter to Mather on 7 July 1773. “I see you inherit all the various learning of your famous ancestors, Cotton and Increase Mather, both of whom I remember.” Franklin enclosed in his letter the writings of a Professor Kalm, “a learned Swede [who] was with us in Pennsylvania,” and who “contended that America was discovered by their northern people long before the time of Columbus.”

Commenting that Mather’s remarks on “the late proceedings against America are very just and judicious,” Franklin gave him the blessing that every preacher concerned with social action may find reassuring. “I cannot at all see any impropriety in your making them, though a minister of the Gospel. This kingdom is a good deal indebted for its liberties to the publick spirit of its ancient clergy, who joined with the barons in obtaining *Magna Charta* . . . There is not doubt but the claim of Parliament, of authority

to make laws *binding on the Colonists in all cases whatsoever*, includes an authority to change our religious constitutions, and establish Popery or Mahometanism, if they please, in its stead; but, as you intimate, *power* does not infer *right*; and, as the *right* is nothing, and the *power*, by our increase, continually diminishing, the one will soon be as insignificant as the *other*.”<sup>13</sup>

In this year, 1773, when Samuel Mather was preaching and publishing his patriotic sentiments, Harvard College awarded him a Doctor of Divinity degree – exactly four score years after his grandfather, Increase, received Harvard’s first doctorate. In 1774, his native Boston honored him by appointment to its most influential policy committee, whose duty it was “to consider and Report a Declaration to be made by this Town to Great Britain & all the World.” What presumption – and what prophecy of things to come!

When war began in April, 1775, Samuel Mather and Andrew Eliot were the only two ministers to remain in Boston throughout the siege. It was no dishonor to the other eight who fled to safer territory, for most of their parishioners also fled. The General Court, which had withdrawn to Watertown, received word that Mather and Eliot had been imprisoned aboard a British man-of-war, but Mather was able to deny the report. Even though he endured “many disagreeable things” during the siege, “yet neither officer nor soldier ever offered any instance or mark of disrespect, ill manners, or indecency towards me . . . although I never refrained, either in private or public, from speaking my sentiments.”<sup>14</sup>

That Samuel Mather was a member of the inner circle of Boston patriots is indicated by a letter which Samuel Adams wrote him from Philadelphia on 26 October 1776. Adams said he would give him “as much Intelligence as the Secrecy to which I am honor bound will allow,” which had a wide margin indeed. He reported on “several Encampments from Kings Bridge to White Plains,” as well as several skirmishes. “The Army is in high Spirits and wish for Action.” Adams expressed the hope that his “assured Friend” in Boston would write him during his Philadelphia mission and keep him informed about home-town news.<sup>15</sup>

Probably the saddest sight that Samuel Mather witnessed in Boston was the dastardly razing of the Old North Meeting-house, where his grandfather, father, and he himself had ministered during the course of nearly a century. He left no account of this impious act of vandalism, but John Lathrop, who was then minister of the Old North, wrote as follows:

“At this time, most of the churches in the town were broken up; and while the pastor of this church and the members in general were dispersed abroad, a number of evil-minded men, of the king’s party, obtained leave of General Howe to pull down the Old North Meeting-house, under the



pretense of wanting it for fuel, although there were then large quantities of coal and wood in the town.

“The house, which was built in 1677, was in very good repair, and might have stood many years longer, had not those sons of violence, with wicked hands, razed it to the foundation.”<sup>16</sup> (If, as is still contended, the Paul Revere lanterns flashed from the tower of this original Old North Church a few months previous to its razing, General Howe may have felt that the aid it had given the rebel cause justified its destruction.)

Of more intense and enduring grief to Samuel Mather than the razing of the ancestral church was the desertion of his son, Samuel, Jr., to the Loyalist cause. It was a grief shared with other Patriot fathers, including Benjamin Franklin, whose son also became estranged and chose to reside in England.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most revealing letters in the vast collection of the Mather family correspondence was written by Samuel, Jr., to his father, and dated “London, 23 September 1783.” He acknowledged “with unspeakable pleasure” the letter he had just received from his father, the first in seven years. But he was “a little hurt” by what Samuel, Sr., had written in an accompanying pamphlet: “It may well be expected that all the Deserters to the cause should never be employed in any Place of consequence to the community.” Since he was prospering none too well in England, the lad hinted that he could be persuaded to return home, but he was doubtful regarding the welcome that would be accorded him.

Then he added a paragraph that was meant to warm his father’s affections toward him: “I purchased at a Bookseller Shop a few days ago a very good *Magnalia* for half a Guinea, and I have picked up by accident my Grandfather’s Funeral Sermon from Genesis 5th, 24th. I will be obliged to you to acquaint me who it was printed by and at what time my Grandfather died, as the Book wants the Title Page, but is otherwise perfect. You see I have regard for my ancestors.”<sup>17</sup>

Samuel Mather inherited most of the great library of books and manuscripts which his father and grandfather had collected. He referred more often to the classical tomes written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, than to the vast stores of early Americana. But he generously made those treasures available to historians and statesmen who wished to use them. John Adams used the Mather library in preparing a legal case for Massachusetts, involved in a boundary dispute with New York.<sup>18</sup> Governor Thomas Hutchinson acknowledged his debt to his “friend and brother, the Rev. Mr. Mather” for materials in his *History of Massachusetts Bay*.<sup>19</sup> The library was used by other historians, including Thomas Prince, Ezra Stiles, and John Callender. In

THE  
DYING LEGACY  
OF AN  
AGED MINISTER  
OF THE  
EVERLASTING GOSPEL,  
TO THE  
UNITED STATES  
OF  
NORTH-AMERICA.

---

Quid est suavis quam bene rem gerere  
pro bono publico ?

*Plaut. in Capt. 3. 2.*

Vincet Amor Patriæ.

*Virgil.*

Urgentibus Rempublicam Fatis, salutare Dei & Hominum  
Admonitiones spernuntur.

*Liv. Decad. 5.*

Instructuosum saltem non erit, quod prodesse tentavi :  
Mens, si effectum non invenerit capiti operis, habet tamen  
Præmium Voluntatis.

*Præf. Salvant Libr. De Gubernat. Dei.*

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B O S T O N :

Printed by BENJAMIN EDES and Sons,  
in CORNHILL.

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M,DCC,LXXXIII.

preparing his history of Rhode Island, Callender not only used documents from Mather's library, but submitted the manuscript-history to him for editing.<sup>20</sup>

Of the score of works, most of them brief, which came from Samuel Mather's pen, the last he wrote in his seventy-eighth year is perhaps the most significant. In *The Dying Legacy of an Aged Minister* (Boston, 1783) he gave counsel to the young nation. He confessed that he had "great comfort and satisfaction" in the difficult choice he had made for "the American cause at the beginning of the conflict with Britain as the cause of truth and righteousness and just liberty." He expressed the concern and hope that "these states would strive to answer to the name and character by which they are distinguished and dignified; which is that of *United States*." Reflecting the interest of four Mather generations in government by written law, he continued: "Nor have we reason to think that these *American states* will ever designedly pass over the constitutions that have been wisely and judiciously established among us." Expressing sentiments akin to those in Washington's Farewell Address, delivered thirteen years later, Mather concluded his *Dying Legacy* of 1783: "It may not be amiss to intreat these American States not to interest themselves in the disputes and contentions of European Powers, nor to take any part in their wars. As we are a great distance from them, and we shall surely hurt ourselves by taking a part in their controversies and warlike engagements; it must be most safe and prudent for us, after the settlement of our peace, not to concern ourselves with the nations of Europe."

**I**N old age Samuel Mather was not an honored patriarch like his grandfathers, Richard and Increase, nor had he used his talents, except on rare occasions, to the high degree of distinction his forebears had driven theirs. But in physical health he was blessed as none of them had been. In the same year he wrote his *Dying Legacy*, he wrote his son in London, with whom he had become reconciled: "I can stil read the Smallest Print or Writing by Candle Light without Spectacles; and my Hearing is exquisite; nor is there a ceasing of my Grinders: So I see no Cause to complain of old Age."

Mid-way in his eightieth year, Samuel Mather died on 27 June 1785. The previous month he had written his Will with a steady, legible hand.<sup>21</sup> He gave an orthodox Puritan testament regarding "the Assistance and Approbation of the one, everliving and unchangeable Being . . . to whose Service and Honour I have often, and I hope sincerely, devoted myself."

He then, with considerable detail, set forth his requests for a simple



funeral and interment. "I would have no embellished and adorned Coffin; For such an one I despise. But I would have quite a plain one . . . When therefore my body is to be deposited in the same Tomb with the remains of my honoured Father and Grandfather, and many other esteem'd Relatives, besides my most respected and beloved Wife; I would have only one Bell tolled just before Sun down, and that but for five Minutes: For I am not willing that sick and infirm Persons should be disturbed with a lengthy Noise . . . And I should be glad to have no funeral Encomiums. It is my Will and I earnestly request it of my Family & Friends that after my Death and Funeral, there be no indulgence to sorrow for me: For their sorrowing will be of no service to themselves, nor any consolation to me."

Although his Church had planned a funeral in the grand style accorded his father and grandfather, his requests for simplicity were honored. In the Copp's (Snow) Hill burial ground "he was interred, without the least ceremony, at 5 minutes past sun setting, followed by six persons without pall bearers . . . and laid in the family tomb."<sup>22</sup>

Nearly two centuries later, a visitor to the Mather Tomb surveyed the scene and later wrote:

#### LINES FROM SNOW HILL, NORTH BOSTON

I like a burial ground that yields a view  
 High on a hill. It's not that resurrected souls  
 Must have a Zion to ascend from –  
 (Though that's a thought.) Rather, we trudging mortals  
 Must have a vertical dimension, and horizontal too,  
 In which to view our kindred dead.  
 See what they saw; or blessed with clearer vision,  
 See *as* they saw.

Through seasons three I've climbed this hill:  
 Spring and summer, though winter is the best,  
 When snow hides most the scars of broken stones  
 And gross neglect of this historic, hallowed ground.  
 I've stood beside the Mather tomb on northern slope,  
 Where mingle ashes in a common grave  
 Of Increase, Cotton, Sammy. Inscriptions all but gone,  
 I know the dates: 1639, the natal year of Increase,  
 And Samuel's death in 1785. A span – can it be true?  
 That blankets nearly half the years  
 From this shore's settlement till now.  
 The long-lived Mathers! The youthful nation!

This height can pierce through time and space . . .  
Beyond the naval ships that flank the Charlestown shore.  
I view an earlier scene: a ferry-boat of oar and sail,  
On which John Cotton, chilled with death, pursued a Harvard mission.  
Again, I see across the widening Charles  
A saddled horse awaiting Increase, to speed him  
On presidential visits to the Cambridge college Yard.  
And yet another horse and rider of later, wider fame,  
Who caught the flash from Old North Church.

Turning back toward Boston's neck  
Where first the settlement began, I miss the landmarks:  
Gone the fine old Georgian manse on Moon street,  
Where Cotton Mather wrote his half-a-thousand tomes.  
(A Virgin of Italian marble guards now the site!)  
Gone the meeting-house, *the* Old North Church,  
Where father, son, and grandson of the Mather line  
Preached the Word within a century's succession.

On this old burial hill, I look not only out but up –  
And that's the way to look from graveyards!  
Up to the light, flecked with shadow too,  
Up to the universal God of Puritan and Quaker,  
Jew and Gentile, mysterious life and love.

Here on Snow Hill I find a place apart  
To dream, resolve, remember – but not to write.  
Too many distractions! Too many ghosts!



The Mather Tomb



*Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society*

MATHER BYLES, SR. Oil portrait by Peter Pelham [c. 1727]





## MATHER BYLES, Sr.

(1708-1788)

## MATHER BYLES, Jr.

(1734-1814)



MATHER Byles, Sr., was the “fatherless grandson” whom Increase Mather described in his Will as “a child whom God has blessed with a strong Memory, ready Capacity and Aptness to learn.” He made a dying request that his son Cotton should oversee the education of the lad, and “in Case he shall be educated for, and employed in, the Work of the Ministry; (which I much desire & pray for,)” he should receive a fourth part of his grandfather’s library.

Those desires and requests would be fulfilled to the letter. Cotton Mather undertook the education of his nephew with the same diligence he gave his son, Sammy, who was only five months older. When Mather Byles were ready for Harvard at the age of fourteen, “his uncle began to levy upon his wealthy friends for funds to support him there.”<sup>1</sup> So this son of a Boston saddler, Josias Byles, who had died just after his son’s first birthday, was fortunate in his choice of a renowned uncle who assured him a college education.

Being less pious and more jovial than his uncle Cotton had been as a Harvard student, he was not subjected to ridicule and hazing by his classmates. In fact, he appears to have been extremely popular, especially for one who chose to spend his leisure hours in literary pursuits rather than campus diversions. He and a few friends wrote essays and verses, which the Franklin brothers gratefully printed in the *New-England Courant*.

Two years after his graduation in the Harvard class of 1725, Mather Byles and his small literary circle interested Samuel Kneeland, a Boston printer, in publishing *The New-England Weekly Journal*. It gave no serious competition to the other two Boston papers – the *News-Letter* which was “newsy” and the *Gazette* which was “commercial.” (The *Courant* had folded in

the meantime.) But the *Weekly Journal* “began a new era in American literary history, for in it poetry, good essays, and solid articles crowded the news from the front page.”<sup>2</sup>

Because the writings were unsigned, their authorship was not generally known until more than two centuries had passed. In May, 1944, the American Antiquarian Society acquired Byles’s own file of the *Weekly Journal*, in which were discovered his marginal corrections for later printings of his works. Perhaps even more of the poems and essays which have no marginal corrections are from his pen, because he was satisfied with them as they first appeared in print. But we may be sure that all the corrected copy was written by him. The essays and poems, not yet collected and edited, would fill a slender volume.

In the third issue of the *Weekly Journal*, dated April 10, 1727, the twenty-year old Byles displayed the imagination and wit for which he later became celebrated. “An ingenious Author [handwritten correction: ‘Writer’] has observed that a Reader seldom peruses a Book with Pleasure ’till he has a Notion of [the writer’s] Physiognomy, the Year of his Birth, & his Manner of living. This Humour I find not a little remarkable in my own Countrymen, who, since the Advertisement which I lately published, have been very busey in their conjectures of my Name, the place of my Abode, & the Circumstances of my Life . . .

“I was born in the Year 1666, in a small Cottage at *Salem*, which is the principal Reason, as I have been apt to imagine, that People have sometimes suspected me for a Conjurer: Though when I have examined myself in that Particular, I have thought, as far as I know my own Heart, that I have looked like another Christian.”

The budding journalist warned his readers that since mimicry is part of his nature, he intends “frequently to write in Quality of an Imitator.” He confesses admiration for an East Indian bird, “which its fellow-Inhabitants call the *Mock Bird*. This *Gentleman in Feathers* is remarkable for having no Note of his own, but is beholden to every Sound he hears for his Accent. The Rustling of the Leaves on the Trees, the Rilling of Brooks, the Noise of the several Beasts, the Songs of other Birds, or the Words of Men, are alike to him; and he repeats them all with equal Nicety and Art. I cannot but look upon myself, as having a remote Affinity to that Bird . . .” In a postscript, Byles requested “those Gentlemen or Ladies, who will do me the Honour to write to me, and by that means to contribute to the Embellishment of my Journal,” to send their letters to “PROTEUS ECHO, Esq., at Mr. Samuel Kneeland’s in Queen Street, Post Paid.”

In the following issue, Byles devoted his front-page essay to the introduction of his five associates. They included the Honorable Charles Gravely, Esq., a merchant who “has traded for many Thousands of Pounds in *Wit* and *Eloquence*, and all sorts of the richest Styles and Figures;” Mr. Timothy Blunt who has “great plainness of Aspect, Speech, and Behavior;” Mr. Will Bitterly, who “trades with the Stars” as a fortune-teller; and “the wonderful Mr. *Honeysuckle*, the Blossom of our Society, who lives perpetually upon Tropes and Similies.” It is evident, however, that Byle’s favorite associate is “the famous Mr. *Christopher Careless*, an inhabitant of Boston, and one who has by a close and vigorous Application to Business, sunk a very plentiful Partimony, and reduced his Fortune to a level with his Ambition . . . This Person is, notwithstanding, of singular Advantage to our Society: He dives into himself for all those Treasures of Knowledge with which he is so wonderfully furnished . . . To Conclude, He is a Man of great Goodness of Temper when he is well pleased, and let him be kept from strong Liquors, and there is not a more sober and temperate Person in the whole Neighborhood.”

Prior to 1727, Boston had not seen writing in this witty vein – and neither had any other American town. The essays in later issues of the *Weekly Journal* ranged in topics from “the Vapours” to literary criticism to theological dissertation. Usually prefixed with an adorning Latin or Greek quotation, the essays were literate and sophisticated, even by contemporary standards. Mather Byles and his circle produced the first American “literary journal.”

The poems which Byles wrote and sometimes signed for the newspapers were widely hailed throughout New England. Little of the humorous verse that he is known to have written has been preserved – which is a pity; but a collection of his religious and commemorative poems was published – which to a modern critic is also a pity! In his day, however, he was the generally acknowledged poet lauteate. His “Poem on the Death of King George I and Accession of King George II,” “An Elegy address’d to His Excellency Governour Belcher,” “On the Death of the Queen,” and “To His Excellency Governour Burnet on his Arrival at Boston” were done in the purple, laudatory style of the times. He addressed the departed Queen:

Oh Caroline! Oh Princess now no more!  
 Each heart bleeds inward, and all Eyes deplore.  
 Stretch’d pale in Death thy lovely Limbs are laid,  
 Thy Beauty, Albion, and thy Joys are fled.<sup>3</sup>



P O E M S  
O N  
*Several Occasions.*

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By Mr. BYLES.

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*Nunc itaque et versus et cætera ludicra pono.*  
Hor. Lib. 1. Epist. 1. v. 10.

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B O S T O N : Printed and Sold by S. Kneeland  
and T. Green, in Queenstreet, 1744.

But on the happy occasion of the royal governor's arrival in Boston, Byles saluted him:

Welcome, great Man, to our desiring Eyes,  
Thou Earth! proclaim it; and resound, ye skies! . . .

Byles had warned the readers of his essays that he would play the role of "the Mock Bird," and in his poetry he often permitted that "Gentleman of Feathers" to introduce false or imitative notes. Some of his verses imitate those of Alexander Pope, with whom he corresponded, and for whom he had unbounded admiration:

O Pope! thy Fame is spread around the Sky,  
Far as the Waves can flow, and as the Winds can fly!<sup>4</sup>

For the writing of hymns and religious verse, Byles chose Isaac Watts for his master, whose influence is often apparent:

Awake my Heart, awake my Tongue,  
Sound each melodious String;  
In num'rous Verse and lofty Song,  
To thee, my God, I sing.

Byles' correspondence with Watts continued for several years, as the English Puritan poet took a fatherly interest in the young nephew of Cotton Mather, with whom he also regularly corresponded. Watts praised and encouraged him, but also advised that his "Christian sentiments might be deluted" by too much reliance on the pagan classics and too much eulogy for governors, kings and queens. Regarding one line in the ode to Governour Burnet, "Rough Winter feigns a youthful Tread," Watts commented: "I don't understand the metaphor."<sup>5</sup>

It was not Watts' mild criticisms, however, which prompted Byles to collect his poems, and in 1744 to write in the Preface of *Poems on Several Occasions*: "The Poems collected in these Pages were for the most Part written as the Amusements of looser Hours, while the Author belonged to the College, and was unbending his Mind from severer Studies, in the Entertainments of the Classicks . . . And the Author has now drawn them into a Volume. Thus he gives up at once these lighter Productions, and bids adieu to the airy Muse."



## *The Glories of the Lord of Hosts,*

A N D

## *The Fortitude of the Religious Hero.*

---

I Sam. xvii. 45.

—*THOU comest to ME with a SWORD, and with a SPEAR— But I come to THEE in the NAME of the LORD of HOSTS, the GOD of the ARMIES of Israel.*



**I**s a hardy Enterprize, my Fellow Souldiers, to which you appoint us, in your annual Elections of us, to preach, upon these Occasions. More than an Hundred Years, have called for as many Military Discourses from the Desk, to sanctify your Arms, and add the peculiar Glory of Religion to your Elections, and your Exercises. In order to gratify your Desires, and answer your Expectations, your Ministers have at these returning Seasons, chosen their various Subjects, suited to the Sons of Battle, and have in a Manner exhausted all that can be said, proper for you to hear, and for the  
Pulpit



IN THE years which intervened between his graduation from Harvard and the publication of the above lines, Mather Byles was slowly and perhaps reluctantly yielding himself to the calling of his family. Literature, like scientific observations and experiments, was good for "the looser hours," but not adequate for the necessary preparation for eternal life.

It would have been difficult for the sensitive youth to resist the expressed wishes of his grandfather Increase and his uncle Cotton, even had he been so disposed. His decision to enter the Congregational ministry was made several years before he published his collected poems, but finding a suitable pulpit was not as easy as he had anticipated.

Nearly a century after his great-grandfather, Richard Mather, had settled in Dorchester, Mather Byles in 1729 was a candidate for that ancestral church. He received, however, only fifteen out of sixty-six votes. At the Old North (Second) Church in Boston, the successor to Cotton Mather was to be chosen as a colleague of Joshua Gee. Mather Byles and Samuel Mather were in the race, and as we noted in the previous chapter, Samuel won. Incidentally, this competition did nothing to endear one cousin to the other, who were poles apart in temperament, and whose ministries would follow divergent courses in the pre-Revolutionary era.

Finally the opportunity came to Mather Byles in 1732 to serve as the first minister of the newly-organized Hollis Street Church in Boston. It was built in "suburban country" of what is now lower Washington street. Governor Jonathan Belcher, who had a fine home and salable real estate in this sylvan area, became the chief patron of the new church and its minister. He induced Thomas Hollis in London to give the church bell, and others of his friends to give the pulpit Bible and the Communion silver – now on display in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. Not the least of the governor's inducements was the skillful prompting of a match between his niece, Anna Noyes Gale, and the bachelor parson. They were married by the Rev. Thomas Prince on 14 February 1734.

Byles was a tall, robust, handsome man, having a resonant voice and excellent enunciation. Unquestionably, he was "the great pulpit ornament of Boston."<sup>6</sup> His sermons and lectures expressed none of the wit of his early essays and poems. While his sermons were scriptural, theologically orthodox, and closely reasoned, they were not dull. He expressed himself simply and directly in the plain style of Richard Mather. In the earliest of his extant sermons, printed in 1729, Mather Byles said: "The sincere Christian endeavors a conformity to the *whole* Moral Law, without any exception, and counts none of the *Commandments* grievous. Both Tables of the Decalogue make

THE  
FLOURISH  
OF THE  
*Annual Spring,*  
Improved in a  
SERMON

Preached at the ancient THURSDAY  
LECTURE in *Boston*, May 3. 1739.

By MATHER BYLES, A.L.M.  
Pastor of a Church in *Boston*.

Numb. xvii. 8. --- *Behold, the Rod of  
AARON--budded, and brought forth  
Buds, and bloomed Blossoms, and  
yielded Almonds.*

BOSTON, Printed and Sold by ROGERS  
and FOWLE at the Printing-Office  
over-against the South-East Corner  
of the TownHouse. 1741.

but one system of Rules for the direction of his life. His GOD, his Neighbour, and himself are all the objects of his becoming care and solicitude.”<sup>7</sup>

**A**T THE age of thirty-three, Mather Byles was invited to preach the annual election sermon to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, before whose members his grandfather, Increase Mather, had preached a farewell sermon some seventy years previously. Byles admitted that in the light of the Military Discourses of more than a hundred years, “there seems to be nothing new for me to add.” Nevertheless, he gave a stirring sermon on “The Glories of the Lord of Hosts and the Fortitude of the Religious Hero.” He first discoursed on the glories of the Lord of Hosts: “the angels in all their shining Forms and un-numbered Regiments;” “the Stars which keep their Military Watch, the Out-Guards of the Celestial Army . . . The Earth is full of his Legions; so also is the great and wide sea.”

At the heart of his sermon he discussed “the Doctrine of true Fortitude,” which is still timely and quotable: “Courage is a moral Virtue, and a thing very different from a flush of Animal Spirits, or a firmness of Fibres in the Heart and Brain. I must have its Foundation in Reason (and shall I add, in Religion, which is the best Reason) or it subsides into Stupidity, or foams up in Frenzy . . . Courage is that Firmness of Mind which will enable a Man, from Principle, to abide by the Dictates of his Rational Nature against all opposition.”

In his concluding remarks, Byles spoke of the dangers of the times: “We are certainly a most exposed People, and in our unfortified Posture seem to lye an easy Prey to the first Invader. But you, Gentlemen, will do what in you lies to diffuse Skill and Valour through your several Regiments and Companies . . . The Drum and the Trumpet should be articulate to every Souldier, and he should know at the first Notes, the Charge, the Retreat, and the Parley. Every man should be acquainted with his Duty, and be exact in the Word of Command. The whole Success of an Engagement, and the Fate of a Country, under God, depends upon this one Military Maxim.”

A lecture on a totally different topic was girded with less stirring but poetic phrases. His Thursday Lecture on the third of May, 1739, entitled “The Flourish of the Annual Spring,” is a good example of the poet-preacher warning against the snares of a New England spring. “Then ’tis that the Face of Nature puts on the most gay and alluring Smiles . . . Then ’tis too, that our animal Spirits are most sprightly and vigorous; and our fermented Blood pours along its rapid Current more warm and impetuous. The Chains of Winter are melted off: and the *Bands of Orion are loosed*: And from this Flush of Blood and Spirits, there arises a Variety of Temptations.



*Divine Power and Anger displayed in*  
*EARTHQUAKES.*

---

A

S E R M O N

Occasioned by the late

*EARTHQUAKE,*

IN NEW-ENGLAND,

*November 18. 1755.*

And Preached, the next LORD'S-Day,  
at *Point-Shirley.*

---

By MATHER BYLES, A.M.

---

Published at the pressing Importunity of the  
Hearers.

---

Ezek. xxvii. 2, 3, 28. *O Thou that art situate at the Entry of  
the Sea---Thy Borders are in the Midst of the Seas, Thy  
Builders have perfected thy Beauty.--- The Suburbs shall shake  
at the Sound-----*

Isai. xli. 5. *The Isles saw it, and feared, the Ends of the Earth  
were afraid, drew near, and came.*

---

B O S T O N: Printed and Sold by S.  
KNEELAND, in Queen-street. 1755.

Our appetites are most raging and violent; and our inferior Faculties are most apt to usurp the Throne of Reason and Conscience . . . How proper then the call? *Rise up and come away*. Does the low Face of the Ground tempt us? *Rise up*. Get above the Earth. Leave the Molehill for the emmets[ants] to inhabit; but let us take to ourselves Wings."

Poetic fancies and phrases would continue to appear in his lectures, but after 1744, he wrote no more verse – with the possible exception of "The New England Hymn." Two family tragedies no doubt inclined him to bid "adieu to the airy Muse." His beloved Anna died on April 26, and the following month his two-year old son, Belcher, was drowned in a tub of water.<sup>8</sup> Although renouncing the "Amusements of looser Hours," at the age of thirty-seven, Byles had nevertheless established himself among the poets of the Puritan colonies as "second only to Anne Bradstreet in fame and perhaps ability."<sup>9</sup>



Like his ministerial forebears, Byles did not pass up an opportunity for timely preaching on a natural disaster. On the Lord's Day following the Boston earthquake of 18 November 1755, he preached on the text of Jeremiah 10:10. "At his Wrath the Earth shall tremble." Byles described the experience as "a terrible Night, the most so perhaps, that ever New England saw. When we remember it, we are afraid, & trem-

bling taketh hold of our flesh." While an earthquake, he contended, "may be accounted for by natural Principles," it was "the supream Being [who] first appointed and regulated the Laws of Nature, with infinite Wisdom & uncontrollouble Sovereignty . . . None can stay his Hand, controul his Counsels, disappoint his Purposes, or say to him, What doest thou?"

In the role of pastor, however, he offered comfort and hope to his people. Early in the sermon he said: "The God of Patience is yet waiting to be gracious; He is loth to strike the fatal Blow to overwhelm us in universal and unavoidable Destruction." And toward the end of the sermon he sounded a familiar Matherian note: "Behold the Goodness as well as the Severity of God! and may this Goodness of God lead us to Repentance . . . The Day of Grace is not over with us, nor the Door of Mercy shut to us."<sup>9</sup>

This was an emphasis which Whitefield and other evangelistic “New Lights” would scarcely have made from Byles’ pulpit if he had invited any of them to preach there – which he did not. Consequently, he was no more in their graces than was Samuel Mather in a neighboring church. Although Byles expressed opposition to emotionalism of the evangelists, he took no part in the raging pamphleteering battle. He even pled for judicial clemency in behalf of James Davenport when he was charged with disorderly conduct.<sup>10</sup>

In another vein, Boston enjoyed the joke that Byles conceived at the expense of the New Lights. Shortly after a ship from London carrying three hundred street-lamps had docked in Boston harbor, he received a call from a neighboring woman, who was a New Light of weak mind and whining voice. Wishing to be rid of her, he asked if she had heard the news.

“O, no! dear Doctor, what news?”

“Why, three hundred *new lights* came over in the ship that arrived this morning from London.”

“Bless me, I had not heard of it.”

“Yes,” said Dr. Byles, “and the Selectmen have wisely ordered them to be put in irons immediately.”

The distraught woman was soon out of his sight and onto the street to make further inquiries.<sup>11</sup>

Byles expressed his ideas of what a minister should be in the ordination sermon for his son, Mather Byles II, in the First Church of Christ, New London, in 1758. “He that gives Light to others had need have double Light within himself. A Minister then should be a man of universal Knowledge. Especially, he should have an intimate Acquaintance with his Bible; and be a thorough Student of Divinity, in all its Branches and Connections . . . He should have a good Taste for Writing: and be thoroughly Learned, without Pedantry; and truly eloquent, without Stiffness and Affectation.”<sup>12</sup>

The preacher of the occasion measured up tolerably well to the qualifications he set before his son. But earlier he had made an observation which, if he had practiced it, would have saved him immense trouble in later years. Describing the ideal minister, he said: “That which might pass for Mirth and Humour in a common Man, would in him be Froth and Levity and Grimace; the Buffoon grafted on the Divine. No; he must be Grave, Temperate, Sober, Meek.”

Perhaps Byles thought he possessed those Pauline fruits of the Spirit, but his neighbors thought otherwise. He had not long been married to his second wife, Rebecca, daughter of Lieutenant-Governor William Tailer,



before their “violent squabbles” became subjects of gossip. She began to look “like a poor ruin’d woman”<sup>13</sup> and the neighbors could guess why. Her husband’s brand of domestic humor was enough to drive any woman to an early grave.

For example, one morning while Rebecca was ironing, she saw visitors entering the gate. Not wishing to be caught in workaday clothes, she hid in a closet. Her husband welcomed the ladies, who in the course of the conversation asked to see his “curiosities.” After showing them his collection of mathematical and scientific gadgets, he threw open the closet door and displayed Rebecca as “my most cherished curiosity.”

Byles’ interest in scientific subjects and experiments – limited though it was compared with his uncle Cotton’s – was the bridge which united him in life-long friendship and correspondence with Benjamin Franklin. They had known each other as boys, and though Ben had to give up formal schooling at the age of ten, their interests in writing and printing, philosophy and religion were mutual. They met in the Franklin printing shop as well as the Cotton Mather home. Even when their political loyalties began to diverge, Byles proposed that Harvard, his Alma Mater, award Franklin an honorary degree, and in turn Franklin suggested that Aberdeen award Byles a doctorate of divinity, which was done in 1765. In proposing the degree, Franklin described his old friend as “A Gentleman of Superior parts & Learning, an Eloquent preacher, and on many accounts an Honor to his Country.”<sup>13</sup>

As the rift widened between England and the American colonies, and consequently between Loyalist and Whig in Boston, Byles did his best – at least in the pulpit – to steer a sane middle course. When asked why he did not preach on politics, he replied: “I have thrown up four breast-works, behind which I have intrenched myself, neither of which can be forced. In the first place, I do not understand politics; in the second place, you all do, every man and mother’s son of you; in the third place, you have politics all the week, pray let one day in seven be devoted to religion; in the fourth place, I am engaged in a work of infinitely greater importance. Give me any subject to preach on of more consequence than the truths I bring you, and I shall preach on it the next Sabbath.”<sup>14</sup>

He kept politics out of the pulpit, but elsewhere he peppered politics and politicians with his wit. On seeing a regiment of British redcoats parading on the Common, he said that “we can no longer complain that our grievances are not being red-dressed.”<sup>15</sup> More offensive was his reference to the French allies as “all-lies.”<sup>16</sup>

He summarized his political views to young Nathaniel Emmons, while they were watching the funeral procession, three thousand strong, for Crispus Attucks. The mourners, "most of them drawn from the slums of Boston," hailed Attucks as a martyr, but Emmons described him as "that half-Indian, half-Negro and altogether rowdy, who should have been strangled long before he was born." As the funeral procession went by, "the Parson turned to me and said: 'They call me a brainless Tory; but tell me, my young friend, which is better – to be ruled by one tyrant three thousand miles away, or by three thousand tyrants not a mile away.'"<sup>17</sup>

Sharp remarks of that kind, widely circulated and invariably exaggerated, won for Byles the enmity of the patriot leaders, along with many of his own parishioners.

He remained in Boston during the British siege of the town, but with more comfort and assurance of safety than his patriot cousin, Samuel Mather. It was later charged by the Hollis Street Church officary that he "associated and spent a considerable part of his time with the officers of the British army." The church record also asserts that his daughters were serenaded by the Royal Band, and that they proudly told of walking on the Common with General Howe and Lord Percy during the siege.<sup>18</sup> These flattering attentions, however, did not spare the Hollis Street Church from quartering British troops, along with the Old South and Brattle Street meeting-houses, whose ministers favored independence.

After the siege of Boston ended and the British forces withdrew, many of Dr. Byles' parishioners returned to find their meeting-house damaged and the pews removed. Their minister was summoned to a meeting on 9 August 1776, and charged not only with friendly acts toward British officers, but also of "neglecting to visit his people in their distress," being unwilling to preach on a fast-day appointed by Congress," and "praying in public that America might submit to Great Britain, or words to the same purpose."<sup>19</sup>

In reply, as the reticent church record states it, Dr. Byles made "such answers as he tho't proper."<sup>20</sup> A far more descriptive account pictures him entering his pulpit "in his ample flowing robes and bands, under a full bush wig that had been recently powdered." Turning with "a portentous air toward the gallery where his accusers sat, he said: 'If ye have ought to communicate, say on!' "

They were prepared to say on, but the deacon chosen to speak was "a man of diminutive stature and feeble voice; and having unfolded a manuscript, commenced reading: 'The Church of Christ in Hollis Street' – 'Louder!' said the Dr. in his deep toned, sonorous voice." Twice more the little deacon began reading, and twice more Dr. Byles shouted 'Louder!'

Straining his vocal chords, the deacon finally began reading the charges against the pastor. After three or four had been read, Byles rose and shouted to the gallery congregation: "Tis false! 'tis false! and the Church of Christ in Hollis Street knows 'tis false!"<sup>21</sup>

With that parting shot, he beat a hasty retreat from the meeting-house in which he had preached for forty-four years. A week later the members held another session, and (dispensing with the time-honored, Cambridge Platform procedure of calling an ecclesiastical council of churches,) they voted that "the Revd. Dr. Mather Byles, having by his conduct put an end to his usefulness as a Publick preacher amongst us, Be and hereby is, dismissed from his Pastoral charge."<sup>22</sup>

This was not the end of his humiliations, for the political authorities also had their say. The Boston Committee of Correspondence and Safety held a hearing on 23 August 1776, to gather testimony on Byles' expressions "very unfriendly to this Country." There was sufficient evidence against him in this regard, but the Committee took no action. Perhaps its members regarded freedom of speech as a basic Anglo-American right!

Having been listed as a public enemy by the selectmen of Boston, he was tried by four justices of the Court of Sessions on 2 June 1777. He was found "so inimically disposed toward this & the other United States of America" that he was to be "transported off the continent to some part of the West Indies or Europe agreeable to a late law of sd. State."<sup>23</sup>

This harsh sentence was never carried out. Dr. Byles was now in his seventy-first year, once an honored poet and preacher, scholar and wit. His "treason" was of a special kind – not active assistance to the enemy, but conversational barbs against Whig neighbors and French "all-lies." Young John Eliot, great-grandson of "the Apostle," summed up the sentiment of the town when he wrote about Byles' trial: "The evidence was much more in favor of him than against him. All that could be proved was that he is a silly, impertinent, childish *person*; I should say inconsistent, if his whole conduct did not manifest him to be one consistent lump of absurdity."<sup>24</sup>

Instead of being deported, he was placed under house arrest. For several months he was guarded by an armed sentinal, whom he called his "Observe-a-Tory." On one occasion Byles was seen by his neighbors pacing in front of his own door with a musket on his shoulder. When they asked why he was guarding himself, he said: "You see, I begged the sentinal to let me go for some milk for my family, but he would not suffer me to stir. I reasoned the matter with him, and he has gone himself to get it for me, on condition that I keep guard in his absence." Summing up the whole farce of his confinement, he said he had been "guarded, regarded, and disregarded."





*Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society*

His public service ended, the pathetic old man lingered on for another eleven years. People wondered how he and his two unmarried daughters, Katherine and Mary, (who will figure in the next chapter,) eked out their daily bread. To the credit of the Hollis Street Church, at least one collection was taken for their benefit. They sold some property – but the library of 2500 volumes was kept intact until after Byles' death. From its auction, several university and public libraries obtained their Increase and Cotton Mather volumes.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of poverty and ostracism, Mather Byles' last years were not without glimmers of contentment. He saw several of his poems, hymns, and essays written in his youth reprinted in post-Revolutionary magazines. In old age he was able to say with faithful resignation that the Twenty-third Psalm had been the exact history of his life.

Two of his last letters, written in 1787, testify to the kindly spirit and staunch faith of the Puritan-Tory octogenarian. One was addressed to his son, Mather Byles, Jr., whose career was no less stormy than his father's. As we noted earlier, the senior Byles preached his son's ordination sermon in New London thirty years previously, and charged him: "You derive from ancestors who have been eminent in the World, and in the Church of Christ: Labor to serve the Lord and shine as they did." But during his ten-year ministry in the First Church of New London, his most shining activity was a bitter, ever-mounting controversy with "the Rogerenes," a branch of the Quakers. He was still engaged in theological skirmishes with them when he called a meeting of his own church. The edited minutes of that meeting were printed under the title: *A Debate between the Rev'd. Mr. Byles . . . and the Brethren of the Church*, (Boston, 1768.) It was curiously signed, "A.Z. Esq."

According to this document, the minister first made a statement that he had received a letter from the wardens and vestry of the North (Christ, Episcopal) Church in Boston, inviting him to be their pastor. He was surprised, but after further correspondence he accepted the call. The Brethren responded: "We are so surprised and so astonished, we know not what answer to make – it's very extraordinary that you did not give us timely notice."

"Minister: I have no particular objection to this church, but believe it to be a true church of our Lord . . . But my salary is not sufficient, &c. My friends are in Boston, &c."

"People: How have you changed your principles?"

"Minister: Only in regard to the order, discipline, and ceremonies."

So, a fifth-generation descendant of Richard Mather and John Cotton, who "could not digest the ceremonies," found them palatable indeed! Christ



*Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society*

MATHER BYLES, JR. Oil portrait by Mather Brown [c. 1780]



Church issued a formal call, which Mather Byles, Jr., promptly accepted. He was back in his native Boston only a short time when the church paid his passage to England. There he received a license from the bishop of London and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Oxford University. On his return, when Boston was militant against the Stamp Act, the tax on tea, and other “infringements on our liberties,” the younger Byles was a leading spokesman in behalf of the mother country. In the phrase of Clifton K. Shipton, “he had a certain genius for unfortunate public performances.”<sup>26</sup> He angered not only the radical Patriots, like Otis and Adams, but also the moderate Loyalists, who wished to be about their business, unaided by any controversial statements from the pulpit.

After serving as rector of Christ Church for only seven years, Mather Byles, Jr. resigned on the eve of the battles of Lexington and Concord. The next March, he and his family, along with the rectors of Trinity Church and King’s Chapel, sailed in Howe’s fleet with many other Boston Tories to Halifax. With his usual pungency of phrase – and with a measure of truth – the younger Byles referred to Nova Scotia as “the American Siberia.”

After this brief digression about a fifth link – and not a strong one – in the Mather genealogy, we return to the letter that Dr. Byles, Sr., wrote to his son in Halifax on hearing of his daughter-in-law’s death in 1787. To either Mary or Catherine Byles he dictated:

“My dearly Beloved Son and First Born,

I am unable to write a Word, but my tender sympathy with you compels me to attempt to dictate. I feel for your Distresses, but can only carry you afresh to Him into whose Hand I have so many times committed you. You Preach to others, Preach now to yourself . . . Your most affectionate and dying Parent,

M. Byles<sup>27</sup>

In the same magnanimous spirit he wrote Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia to thank him for his gift of lightning-rods, to which Byles attributed the saving of his life when his house was struck by a bolt. “Under great weakness of old age and a palsy,” he dictated, “I seize this opportunity of employing my daughter. Your Excellency is now the Man that I early expected to see you: I congratulate my Country upon having produced a Franklin, and can only add I wish to meet you where compleat Felicity and we shall be forever united.”

The great elder statesman replied cordially that he was pleased “to understand that my Points have been of service in the Protection of you and yours. I wish for your sake, that Electricity had really prov’d what it at first was suppos’d to be, a Cure for the Palsy.” Mentioning his estranged Tory son

To the Honnourable  
Dr Benjamin Franklin.  
London.

Sir,

It was with great Surprize and Pleasure, that I received your Picture from Phyladelphia. And it is with no little Pride, that when the Picture introduces talk of the Original, a Theme always pleasing to the Lovers of Learning, that I can pronounce, This was sent me by Dr Franklin him self."

But my Ambition has been <sup>augmented</sup> ~~greatly~~ by a Copy of a Letter from London, written by you to some unknown Person, in which you Honour me with a Character so far beyond any Merits of mine that I blush to read. It was the utmost wish of one to be known only by the Title of Sir Phillip Sidney's Friend. I can boast, and point to your own Hand to prove it, that I have been <sup>at least</sup> ~~Dr~~ Franklin's long Acquaintance. I had not the least Apprehension that any Foreign Honours were designed me, till I was informed of it by a Letter from your Side of the Water and received this Transcript of your Friendship. My little offering of Gratitude will make no perceptible Addition to the Acknowledgements universally paid you by the <sup>whole</sup> ~~World~~ of Literature and Science.

living in England, Franklin said that he too was fortunate to have a faithful daughter caring for him in his old age. He then quoted:

A son is a son till he takes him a wife,  
But a daughter's a daughter for all of your life.

To add to Byles' collection of curiosities, Franklin sent him "the inclosed Medal, which I got struck in Paris."<sup>28</sup>

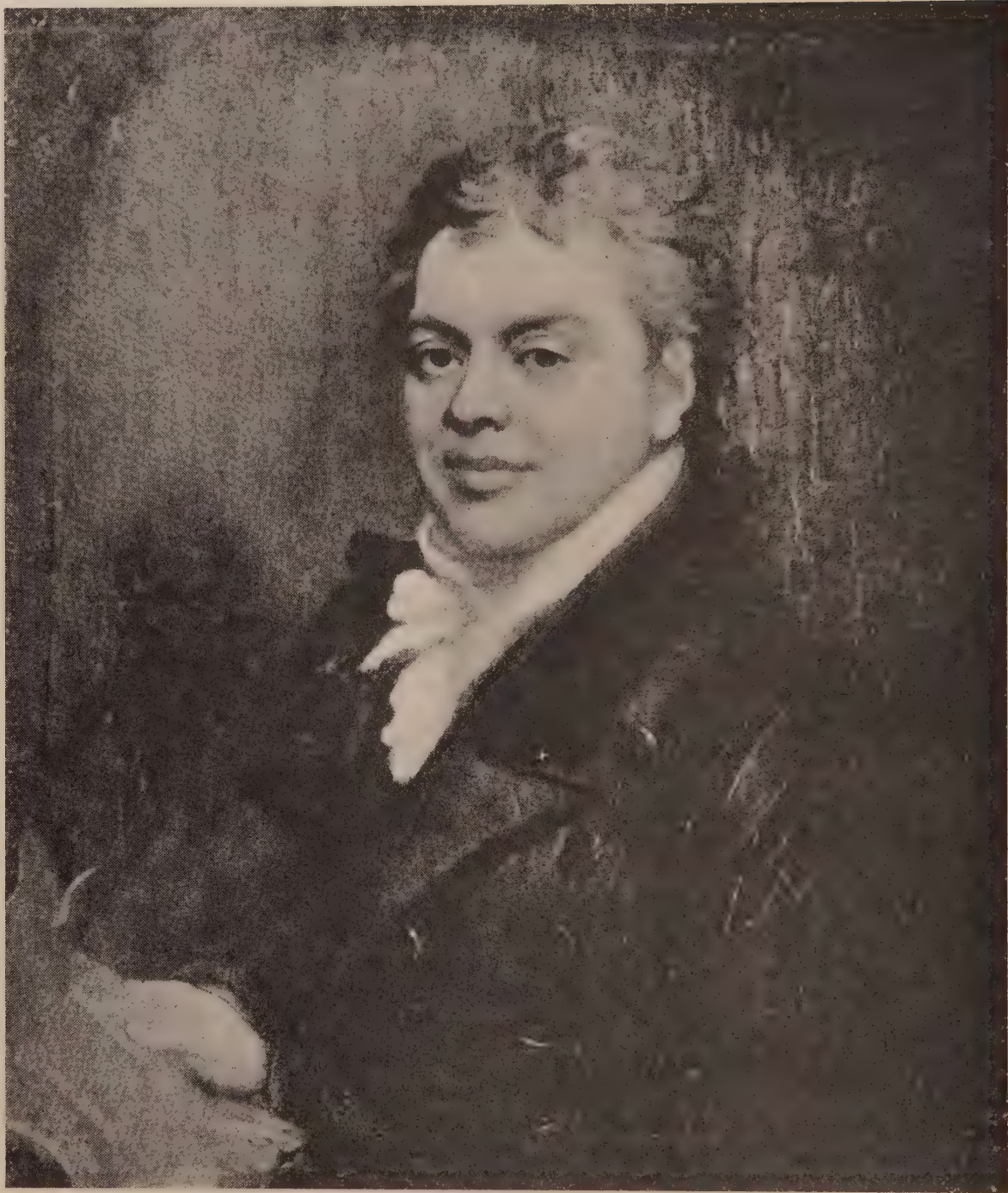
Franklin's letter was one of the last joys of his life, for burdened with palsy and failing memory, Mather Byles died on 5 July 1788. His body was interred in the Old Granary Burying Ground, Boston, near the graves of John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Paul Revere, and other Revolutionary heroes whose political loyalties were at variance with his.

What his career as poet, essayist, and preacher might have been in less troubled and divisive times, we can only speculate. He had the youthful talents and promises to distinguish himself in all three roles. But in early manhood he cast aside the roles of poet and essayist because he thought them incompatible with that of preaching the Word. The last years of his life, like those of his uncle Cotton, were essentially tragic, though for different reasons. Haunted by poverty and ill health, he was an outcast in the land of his birth, a land which his ancestors had helped to tame and shape. What went wrong with him after the outbreak of hostilities? Was it a sentimental attachment to England which he had never seen? Was it snobbery which led him to prefer the company of Lord Percy and General Howe to that of provincial leaders like Sam Adams and James Otis? Or was it, as he indicated, a choice between the tyranny of a distant king and the tyranny of a neighborhood mob? To his misfortune, he chose the former of the evils.

Of all his writings, he is probably best remembered for his "New-England Hymn," which pulses with Puritan faith and patriotic sentiment:

To Thee the tuneful Anthem soars,  
To Thee, our Fathers' God and ours;  
This Wilderness we chose our Seat:  
To Rights secur'd by equal Laws  
From Persecution's Iron Claws,  
We here have sought our calm Retreat . . .  
Lord, guard our Favours; Lord, extend  
Where farther Western Suns descend;  
Nor Southern Seas the Blessings bound;  
Till Freedom lift her chearful Head,  
Till pure Religion onward spread,  
And beaming, wrap the Globe around.<sup>29</sup>





*Courtesy of the American Antiquarian-Society*

MATHER BROWN: Self-portrait (London, 1785)



# MATHER BROWN

(1761-1831)



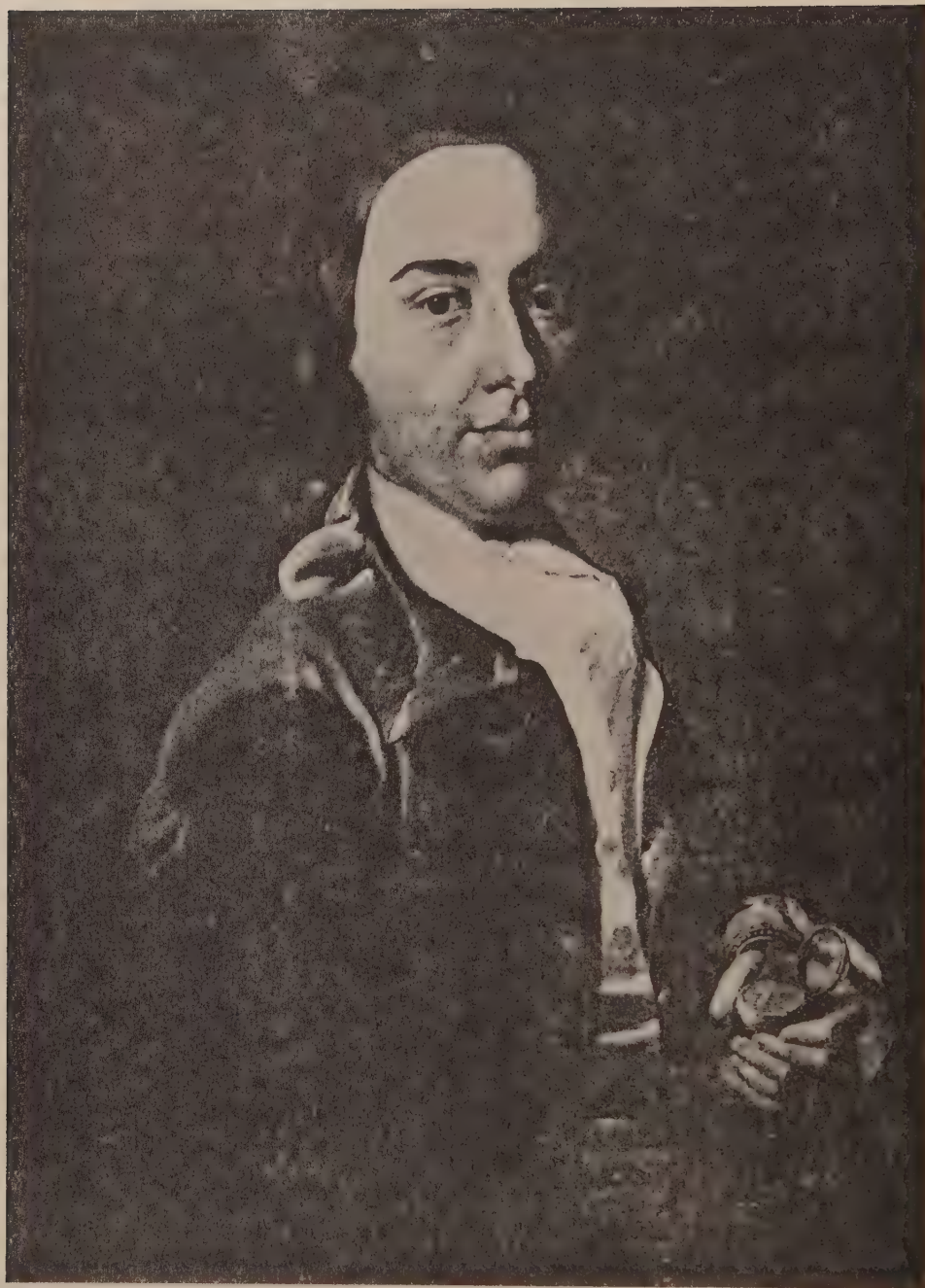
MATHER Brown's star has been rising in recent years, particularly since the publication of *The Adams Papers*<sup>1</sup> and the celebration of the American Bi-Centennial. A popular portrait painter during his lifetime, whose American subjects included Jefferson, Paine, John and Abigail Adams, as well as British royalty and nobility, Brown's reputation suffered its nadir within a few years after his death. The exact facts about his name, date and place of birth, the names of his most famous portrait-sitters, and even the date of his death, became garbled or unknown. What purported to be an authoritative *Biographical and Critical Dictionary of Painters, Engravers, Sculptors and Architects* by S. Spooner, (N.Y., 1853,) included this brief and generally incorrect sketch:

"Brown, Mather or Matthew, an English painter who lived about 1795. He painted the portraits of Cornwallis, and other English officers of his time; also several historical subjects, from the war in India with Tippo Sahib, and from scenes in Shakspeare. He died in 1810."

By way of correction, Mather Brown was not English, even though he spent the last fifty years of his career in London. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts on 7 October 1761, and was baptized five days later by his grandfather, Mather Byles. His father, Gawen Brown, was a competent and prosperous clockmaker, whose most notable creation was the clock in the Old South Meeting-house, installed in 1774. (The clock still runs!) His mother, Elizabeth Byles Brown, was a great-granddaughter of Increase Mather. Her portrait, like that of her husband, was painted by Copley, and shows a strong Matherian strain of intelligence and character.

Because Mather Brown was not a diarist nor autobiographer like several of his forebears, and as a life-long bachelor had no children to eulogize him, most of the details of his early life and later career are lost to us. It is known, however, that his mother died when he was a child, and that his father soon remarried. Gawen Brown was a Loyalist, and shortly after the outbreak of war in 1775, he sailed for England. Young Mather was left in Boston with





*Courtesy of Mr. Thomas B. Clarke*

GAWEN BROWN by Copley – (1763)



dotting maiden aunts, Mary and Catherine Byles, whose affection he long cherished and reciprocated. It is probable that Miss Mary, an amateur artist, gave him his first lessons in colors and painting.

But it is doubtful, biographical assertions to the contrary, that Mather Brown at the age of twelve studied portraiture under Gilbert Stuart. He was only six years older than Brown, and in 1773 was studying under Cosmo Alexander, a Scottish portrait-painter in Newport, Rhode Island. Nevertheless, the story appeared in print that one day in Boston “the great portrait-painter stood looking from his front window,” saw Mather Brown pass, wave to him, and approach his front door.

“Say I’m not at home,” he ordered his servant.

“Mr. Stuart is not at home, sir.”

“Yes he is – I saw him at the window!” Brown declared.

“Yes sir,” said the servant while closing the door, “he saw you and says he is not at home.”<sup>2</sup>

While Stuart did not have a home in Boston at the time, nor could he have afforded a house and servant in Newport, the yarn illustrates the moodiness and gruffness of the later Stuart. It is another apocryphal story about the Mathers, akin to the one about Increase burning Calef’s book in the Harvard Yard, and Cotton on horseback witnessing a Salem witchcraft execution – malicious yarns that cannot be authenticated.

That Brown did have at least one lesson from Stuart, probably during a brief Boston visit, is confirmed in a letter written from London, 22 August 1817: “I wish to know particularly how Mr. Stewart goes on. He was the first person who learnt me to draw at about 12 years of age at Boston.”<sup>3</sup>

During the second year of the Revolution when he was only sixteen, Mather began a lack-luster career as an itinerant portrait-painter and wine merchant. Apparently his sales of wine brought him more income than his primitive portraits and minatures, as he wandered through the frontier area from Worcester to Springfield to Peekskill. He never forgot the trials of that journey, for in a reminiscent letter to his aunts fifty years later he wrote: “You mention Peekskill, to which place I walked 200 miles there and 200 back, in search of business, a tedious walk with Knapsack on my Back & a despairing Heart.” While in Peekskill, the itinerant lad wrote: “The Yankeys are going to Philadelphia: I believe I shall follow them.”<sup>4</sup>

But he changed his mind, for we next hear from him in Cape Francois. “I do not intend to stay long in this place,” he wrote. “Shall be off to Europe in a few months before my Health fails, which I see no likelihood of, as my Appetite is better than ever, a good Sign. But I shall stay here till I here from

M. Brown, London

Boston Jan 7. 1784.

Mr Thomas Sheaffe, (whom I need not inform you is the Son of our valuable Friend) kindly offering to take the Care of Letters to England: presents a most favorable Opportunity of writing a few lines to my dear Mother. almost five months, have elapsed since the date of your last, tho' there has been several arrivals in the Interim, & we have wrote you more than once, tho' you so entirely engrossed by your attention to your new connections, as to have forgot that you have Relations in America that still love you: Capt. Callahan is not yet arrived he has met with such severe Storms on his Passage as to be obliged to put into Halifax to repair, & I just hear is cast away in Cape Cod, the Vessel lost: but the Crew & Cargo all saved. By him I hope to have a large Packet. which will give me some <sup>account</sup> intelligence of your Excursion to Windsor, where as you say you were going to Draw: but by private Intelligence that I have, I hear there is a certain young lady of great Beauty & very large Fortune, & every Qualification requisite to render the married State happy & agreeable."

Grandfather Mather Byles writes: "Five months have elapsed since the date of your last . . . You have relations in America that still love you."

Mr W<sup>m</sup> Pepperrell and Family, which I have sent to his Mother at Portsmouth they were exhibited — I have also painted Young Bulfinch — and among <sup>other</sup> great People the illustrious J. Adams Esq. (Ambassador from the States, to His Britannic Majesty and his Family, which will honour the next Exhibition.

Mather Brown responds by telling how busy he has been painting Sir Wm. Pepperrell and Family, the young Bulfinch, and the illustrious J. Adams and his Family.

you, and have one particular Favor to beg of you which is to write me a letter of Recommendation to Mr. Copley, as I am determined to go to London. This is not a wild Scheme, as I have *hard Johannes* enough to support me for 3 years, and I will not come back to go into the American Army or starve in Boston."

With the blessings of his family, Mather Brown sailed for Europe in 1780. His grandfather, Mather Byles, provided him with a letter of commendation to John Singleton Copley, who during the 1760s and early 70s had painted many portraits of Boston notables, including himself. Copley had already at the age of forty-two established a reputation in London for his glorified historical scenes, including "The Defence of Gibraltar," "Charles the First in the House of Commons," and "The Death of Lord Chatham."

The nineteen-year old lad carried an even more important letter from Dr. Byles, addressed to an old friend, Dr. Franklin. Arriving first in Paris, he was warmly greeted by the elder statesman. Franklin in turn gave him a cordial letter of introduction to Benjamin West, whose studio for the training of young American artists in London had included, or would later include Copley, Stuart, Trumbull, S.F.B. Morse, and the Peales – Charles Willson and Rembrandt. West enthusiastically enrolled Brown as a pupil, and gave him instruction "gratis, in consequence of Dr. Franklin's recommendation." The artistic career of a colonial youth could not have been better launched in the capital city!

In reviewing this period of schooling and apprenticeship, Cuthbert Lee, a modern art historian, appraised the work of Mather Brown: "He was a brilliant student, and absorbed all he could of the work which he had opportunity to study. He is the only one of West's pupils associated with Stuart who shows in some of his work sufficient resemblance to the latter so that experts have occasionally taken his paintings for those of Stuart. Other paintings of Brown resemble those of West."<sup>5</sup> (We shall later note a famous Brown painting wrongly attributed to Copley.)

Only two years after his arrival in London, Mather Brown proudly wrote home: "I have exhibited four Pictures at the Exhibition (Royal Academy.) The King and Queen were to see it yesterday . . . I spent three weeks at Winsor where I often hunted with the King, and I have a bow from Him." He was no less impressed by his contacts with royalty than his great-great grandfather, Increase Mather, had been a century before.

Nor was his dedication to duty and industriousness any lower than that of his better educated forebears. In July, 1784, he wrote: "I will let them see if an obscure Yankey Boy cannot shine as great as any of them. My ambition





*Courtesy of the Boston Athenaeum*

JOHN ADAMS by Mather Brown (1788)

shall prove my Alliance with Apollo, and will produce a new Phenomenon, to make the rays of Phiebus (*sic*) shine and rise for the western Hemisphere.” Shades of the youthful Cotton Mather!

The above letter may have been in reply to one his grandfather had written to him from Boston the previous January: “Almost five months have elapsed since the date of your last [letter,] tho’ there have been several arrivals in the interim. We have wrote you more than once. Are you so entirely engrossed by your attention to your new connexions as to have forgot that you have relations in America that still love you?”<sup>6</sup>

He was indeed “engrossed” with many social activities and portrait commissions. He felt the need for larger and more fashionable quarters than he had ever occupied before. He described in a letter of 16 September 1784, written at 20, Cavendish Square, his “very elegant House, where I have genteel Apartments for my Pictures, and cut a respectable Appearance which is of great Consequence for one of my Profession. my Rent is 25 guineas pr. Ann. and I have laid out this Week as much more for furniture, my Name is elegantly engraved on a Brass Plate on the Door, and I board myself with the help of a Lodger in the House as cheap as I can – I am just entering the World, and have all the good Wishes of my Friends, and hope to get Business.”<sup>7</sup>

While waiting for a rush of business to his new elegant establishment, and wishing to prove his continuing love to his family, he painted a self-portrait, and shipped it to his aunts in Boston. It portrays a youth in his early twenties, with generous, smiling lips and keen brown eyes, dressed as a conservative gentleman, but without benefit of hair stylist. His right hand holds a letter on which, now faded, his family deciphered a message: “My Dear Aunts – Neither time nor distance can diminish my affections.” After hanging in their modest livingroom throughout their lifetimes – and they both survived their nephew – the self-portrait is now in the impressive collection of Mather portraits in the American Antiquarian Society.

In 1785, Mather Brown began painting the Adams family in London – John, Abigail, and Abigail II. An enthusiastic account of Brown and his art was written by young Abigail to her brother, John Quincy Adams on 4 July 1785: “A rage for Painting has taken Possession of the Whole Family . . . *I expect it will be next that Mr. Brown is painter to the American Ambassador’s family.* He was very sollicitous to have a likeness of Pappa, thinking it would be an advantage to him, and Pappa Consented. He has taken the best likeness I have yet seen of him, and you may suppose [he] is very Proud, when so many have failed before him. Mamma has set for hers, and I followed the example . . . It is a very tasty picture I can assure you, whether a likeness or not. Pappa



*Courtesy of the N.Y. State Historical Association*

ABIGAIL ADAMS by Mather Brown (1785)



is much pleased with it, and says he has got my character, a Mixture of Drolery and Modesty.”<sup>8</sup> (Her portrait now hangs in the Long Room of the old Adams’ house in Quincy, Massachusetts.)

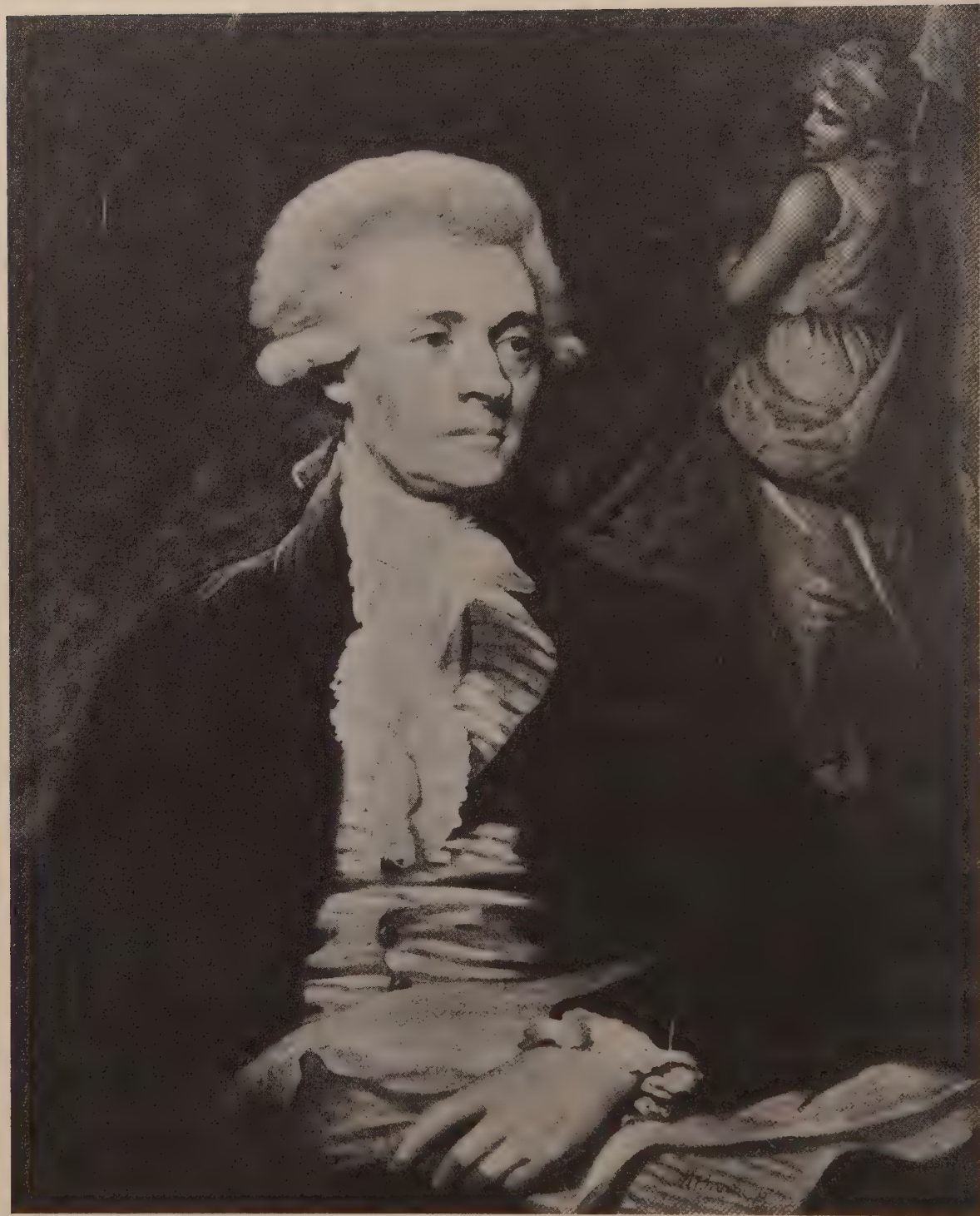
Having established a favorable reputation with the Adams’ family, Brown was pleased to paint Thomas Jefferson’s portrait in the spring of 1786, probably by Adams’ arrangement. It was the first of the known Jefferson portraits, picturing a slender young nobleman in courtly dress looking dreamily into space. In the background is a statue of a draped feminine figure looking down no less dreamily upon him.

Both Adams and Jefferson admired the other’s portrait, and requested Brown to paint them replicas which they might exchange. The artist did so for a commission of ten pounds each. In later years the Jefferson replica graced the Adams’ livingroom, (and is still in the family collection,) while the Adams’ replica was hung at Monticello until Jefferson’s death in 1826. This portrait was sold at a Boston auction in 1833; it was later acquired by George Francis Parkman. He bequeathed it to the Boston Athenaeum, where it now hangs in the Trustees’ Room. Strangely and inexplicably, the original Brown portraits of both presidents are now lost, and no clue survives regarding when, where, or how they disappeared.

“The good likeness of Mamma,” Abigail Adams, painted by Brown in 1785, has also been engulfed in mystery, including a forged signature. Like the original portrait of her husband, Abigail’s also disappeared from the Adams’ household. It surfaced in 1938, when it was sold at the Erskine Hewitt auction under the description “Portrait of a Lady, painted about 1800.” It went for a bid of \$310. Not until 1948, however, was the subject of the portrait recognized as Abigail Adams, and advertised for sale by the Henry Shaw Newman Gallery in New York. The artist was identified as “Robert Earl, 1751-1801. Signed.” Indeed the portrait was so signed, but on top of the varnish, which made the signature suspect.

If Earl had painted the portrait during the few weeks of 1785 he was in London, he would have competed with Brown who (as we have seen in young Abigail’s letter to her brother in July, 1785,) had become “Painter to the American Ambassador’s family.” No mention is made anywhere in the vast Adams’ correspondence of Ralph Earl. If only Mather Brown had signed the portrait and written the name of its forty-year old subject on the back of the canvas, considerable mystery and hanky-panky would have been averted. The portrait now, with authentic attribution, is owned and suitably displayed by the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown.

Brown was one of the few 18th century American painters who drew



THOMAS JEFFERSON by Mather Brown (1788)

book illustrations. He was well represented in John Bell's twenty-one volumes of *The Dramatick Writings of Will. Shakspeare*, published in London, 1785-87. Blessed with the patronage of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, with extensive commentary "from the best editions of Sam. Johnson and Geo. Steevens," this beautifully printed and leather-bound edition was one of the publishing events of the decade. Word finally reached America of Brown's contribution to the work, as noted in the *New-York Packet*, 2 November 1786:

"We are told that our countryman, Brown, has drawn most of the principal performers on the stage, in the best scenes in Shakespear – Engravings from all of which have been taken for Bell's edition of that work. He has, we are also told, in his room in London, pictures of near one hundred Americans, who are universally known."

Mather Brown himself wrote in 1785 to his family in Boston: "Among other great people I have painted Sir William Pepperell and family." For more than a century the Pepperell family had held a position of distinction and wealth in the merchantile aristocracy of New England, ever since the first William Pepperell in 1670 landed at Piscataqua, Maine. The family fortune was built up through four generations in lumbering, land purchases, shipbuilding, and commerce.

Among the most colorful and charming of Brown's portraits is "The Children of Sir William (Sparhawk) Pepperell." But like the portrait of Abigail Adams, the Pepperell children had adventurous travels and a confused provenance before finding a permanent home.

The portrait of the children, along with Brown's portrait of Sir William, was exhibited in the Royal Academy, London in early 1785. Later in the year, the children's portrait was shipped to Sir William's mother in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Well after her death, it appeared in a sale at the Old Portland (Maine) Museum. Presuming it to be a Copley, Stephen Longfellow bought it in 1841 for his brother, Henry Wadsworth, for only fifty cents! Another brother, Samuel, in his *Life of Henry W. Longfellow* described the scene: "It was found, a very delapidated canvas, at the sale of the old 'Portland Museum' among a rubbish of wax-works, Indian weapons, stuffed animals, etc." The portrait was cleaned and repaired for H. W. Longfellow in 1842, and given further restoration in 1975. Properly attributed to Mather Brown, the Pepperell children's portrait now adorns the parlor's east wall in Longfellow's Craigie House, Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>10</sup>

Charles Bulfinch was another American who sat to Brown – in 1786. Having graduated from Harvard in 1781, he spent the five intervening years touring Europe and studying architecture. Regarding the portrait, Bulfinch





*Courtesy of the Longfellow Trust*

THE CHILDREN OF SIR WILLIAM PEPPERELL by Brown (1785)

wrote his mother: "It is esteemed a good likeness; but I think it a very dull, unmeaning face; but we must not blame the painter for that, as it was not his duty to create, but to copy. You will find it very rough but that is the modish style of painting, introduced by Sir Joshua Reynolds."

Charles Bulfinch later distinguished himself by building the first theatre in Boston, and designing the (new) State House, Faneuil Hall, the (old) City Hall, as well as forty churches and other notable buildings throughout New England. He was the architect of the national Capitol in Washington from 1817 to 1830, the date of its completion. Mather Brown's portrait of the youthful Bulfinch, like the youthful Jefferson, was the first of many for which he sat.

On 18 December 1788, Mather Brown was appointed by Prince Fredrick, Duke of York to be "Portrait Painter to His Royal Highness, & to look upon Himself & sign Himself as such accordingly." This appointment gave him at the age of twenty-seven lucrative employment in the royal household, as well as the assurance he had "arrived" in the upper echelon of portrait painters. He was soon commissioned to paint King George III, Queen Charlotte, and the Prince of Wales, later George IV, whose portrait is in the royal collection of Buckingham palace.

That Brown's commissions extended beyond portrait-painting for royalty is attested by a letter his aunt Catherine Byles wrote to her brother, Dr. Mather Byles, Jr., then in Halifax: "Received letter from M. Brown accompanied by two beautiful prints . . . taken from his paintings, which are now placed over the altar of a new church in the Strand . . . The originals are highly applauded. He writes that he has lately been engaged making new designs for a new edition of Robinson Crusoe . . . He has taken a number of portraits, [including] Miss Faron, the finest comedian on the stage, and Mrs. Mahon, usually called the Bird of Paradise."<sup>11</sup>

Mather Brown was in vogue as a portrait-painter, minaturist, book-illustrator, and painter of historic scenes during the last decade and a half of the 18th century. But his fortunes changed for the worse with the century's turn.

**T**HE declining state of his popularity was due, not to a decline of personal talent nor to a change of public taste in art – ever fickle – but to a change of Britain's political and economic fortunes. In October, 1799, the Duke of York capitulated his forces to Napoleon, and soon thereafter Britain declared the whole coast of Holland under blockade. By mid-1800, Napoleon had established himself as 'First Consul' in the

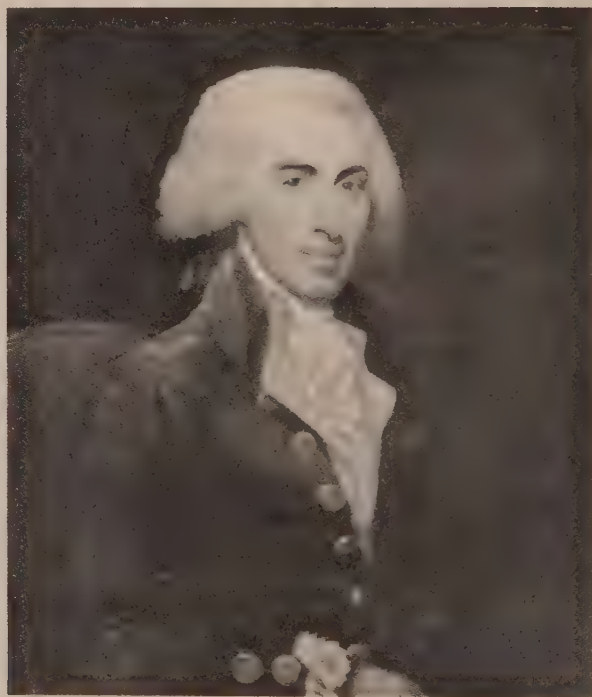


ABIGAIL ADAMS II (SMITH)  
by Mather Brown (1785)

*"A tasty picture, I can assure you, whether a likeness or not. Pappa says he has got my character, a mixture of Drolery and Modesty."*

CHARLES BULFINCH  
by Mather Brown (1785)

*"I think it a very dull, unmeaning face; but we must not blame the painter for that, as it was not his duty to create, but to copy."*



*Courtesy Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University*



Tuileries, had defeated the Austrians at Marengo, and reconquered Italy. An anxious English aristocracy had more pressing concerns than sitting for their portraits or for purchasing heroic murals. The war had reduced trans-Atlantic travel to a minimum. The defeat of the Federalist party, led by Adams and Pinckney, to the then-named Republican party, led by Jefferson and Madison, did not encourage wealthy Americans to invest their endangered capital in paintings.

The “elegant house” in Cavendish Square, under long-term lease, became a heavy financial burden to Brown. Perhaps he had lived extravagantly, with “a servant in livery,” but no higher than he felt his position and commissions warranted. In financial distress, he hoped he might receive some relief from the estate of his father, who died in 1801. But since they were probably estranged while both were in England, Gawen Brown disinherited his only son. Mather noted that “all his property is left to the Daughters to my exclusion, a Circumstance which affords me the deepest regret, at a time when my situation is extremely distressing . . . I have attempted in vain to get into some other line of Business as my Eyes are so very painful to me – and I am loathe to go to any other country, lest I should be ruined.”

In spite of poor health and estate, Mather Brown continued to paint many portraits and historical scenes, apparently driven by a desire to pay off his Cavandish Square debts. In triumph he wrote from Liverpool on 10 June 1810, that he had given up the fashionable house, “and was able when I left to pay all my debts, and everyone 20 shillings in the pound . . . I never kept any company, or allowed myself any amusement that was attended with expense. By these means I painted a multitude of pictures, but am sorry to say that numbers remain unsold, for which I hire a room in London to show them.”<sup>12</sup>

Probably many overflowed into an adjoining bedroom, as Cotton Mather’s books once flowed down his cellarway. At any rate, a certain “Mr. Leslie” visited the rooms and wrote: “A more melancholy display of imbecility I never witnessed. Imagine two large rooms crowded with pictures, great and small, historical and portrait – in some places several files deep. I thought of Gay’s lines:

In dusty piles his pictures lay,  
For no one sent the second pay.”<sup>13</sup>

Around the turn of his fiftieth year, Mather Brown again became an itinerant painter, as in his youth. In the earlier-quoted 10 June 1810 letter he wrote: “From London I went to teach a School in Buckinghamshire – from thence I went to Bath and Bristol and followed portrait painting, from

Act 5.

CYMBELINE.

Scene 1



M. Brown del.

Thornthwaite sculp.

**MR. POPE in POSTHUMUS.**

*Yea, bloody cloth I'll keep thee.*

**KING JOHN**

Act 3

Scene 2



M. Brown del. from a Portrait by M<sup>r</sup>. Stewart.

Thornthwaite sculp.

**MR. HOLMAN in FAULCONBRIDGE.**

*"Austria's Head lie there"*

Act 4.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL. Scene 4.



M. Brown del.

Thornthwaite sculp.

**MR. WARREN in the Character of HELENA.**

*You must know I am supposed dead.*

Act 3.

**KING HENRY VI. P. 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Scene 3.



M. Brown del.

Thornthwaite sculp.

**MR. BADDELEY in PETER.**

*I have taken my last draught in this world.*

Mather Brown's Illustrations for Bell's THE DRAMATICK WRITINGS OF WILL. SHAKSPERE, (London, 1785-87). The volumes were dedicated to the Prince of Wales, whose portrait Brown later painted when he became King George IV.



thence to Staffordshire (where I saw the famous Potteries) and from that to this place, of Liverpool, which is in Lancashire.” In the ancestral shire of his distant forebear, Richard Mather, he would spend the next thirteen years of his life, working assiduously but finding few customers. His letters throughout this period reflect his despondency and “nervous disorders.”

His most cheerful letter, addressed to “My beloved Aunts,” was dated 6 September 1823, Liverpool: “There is an Exhibition in this town, at which I have two Pictures, one representing “Fishermen preparing their Nets” and the other called the “Fisherman’s Daughter . . . I have painted a View of the North Shore at Liverpool, with the Bathing Machines, and Girls selling fruit, which appears to please – my industry is unabated, my living and early rising regular, and my habits have long since been fixed.”

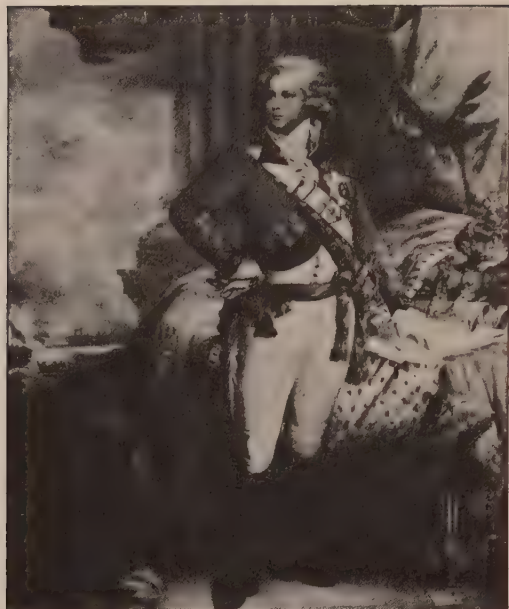
He concluded on a reminiscent note: “I thank you for your description of the Alterations in the City (not town) of Boston. how well I remember the British Encampment, and the old pastures, and standing on Beacon Hill to view the Battle of Bunker’s Hill! as fresh in my mind as if it was yesterday. I have painted General Donkin who was a captain at that Battle.”

Returning to London in the spring of 1824, he rented a room in the home of Thomas Hofland, a landscape painter. He was to live there his last seven years, modestly but not poverty-stricken, on a government annuity. His time was spent not in seeking new commissions for portraits, but in perfecting to his liking the historical murals he most cherished. In the last letter he wrote his aunts, he said: “I have recently completed an historical painting twelve feet in height, representing the Resurrection of our Blessed Savior, with many figures . . . and I likewise painted another of the Holy Family of the same size which is in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy at Somerset House. These pictures escaped censure and were approved by the public, but I am sorry to say that they afforded me empty praise, for they remain in my room unsold.” It may have cheered him, however, that he had been designated “Artist to His Majesty William the 4th,” and had his name announced in the annual catalogue.

In his late years he faithfully attended Church of England services, which greatly pleased his aunts. It might even have pleased his Puritan clerical ancestors, John Cotton and Richard Mather, for it was no longer the heretic-hunting and inquisitorial church of Charles I and Archbishop Laud. With the passing of two centuries, the Anglican hierarchy had become tolerant of non-conformity, even as New England Congregationalism had mellowed in its attitude toward the Mother Church.

Mather Brown, several weeks after a heart attack in the British Gallery,





GEORGE IV by Mather Brown

*Courtesy of H.M., Elizabeth II*

Appointment of Mather Brown as  
Portrait Painter to the Duke of York

It is His Royal Highness The  
Duke of York's pleasure that  
Mr Mather Brown of Cavendish  
Square be appointed Portrait  
Painter to His Royal Highness, &  
is to look upon Himself & sign  
Himself as such accordingly

Rich<sup>d</sup> Grenville—  
York House  
December 9<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> 1788

died on May 25, 1831. His solicitor and executor, Shirley F. Woolmer, Esq., wrote Mary and Catherine Byles in Boston about their nephew's death, and added: "The property left by Mr. Brown does not appear considerable, as he had invested his capital in the purchase of a Government life annuity which of course ceases on his death. The whole of the pictures left by him have been valued at less than a hundred pounds, and the residue of his property (not including his pecuniary means) appears to be almost worthless, being merely a few old hats, shoes and worn linen with a chest of drawers, and a few other sundries which are almost useless for sale."<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Hofland, a painter of repute, in whose home Brown died, was more consoling when he wrote the Misses Byles: "Many of his pictures are admirable and all of them give proof of great ability, but like those of Mr. West it may be said that they are not infashion. There has been a hue and cry raised against their stiles which are much alike, and at present they are little thought of and will sell for a trifle, but time's sure to come when their merits will be known and appreciated. Such is the opinion of several of the first artists and particularly the late Sir Thomas Lawrence."<sup>15</sup>

Hofland's prophecy has been fulfilled. The merits of Brown's paintings are known and appreciated in several public collections – the National Portrait Gallery in London, the Buckingham Palace collection, Christ Church, Oxford, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the Boston Athenaeum, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the American Antiquarian Society. Some of Brown's portraits are in private collections – like his Thomas Jefferson, owned by descendants of John Adams. Others have mysteriously disappeared, like his originals of Adams and Jefferson. His portrait of Thomas Paine was in the 1828 exhibition of the Boston Athenaeum, but its present whereabouts is unknown. No doubt some of his paintings are still falsely attributed to other artists, as happened to the one of Abigail Adams until corrected more than a century later. But the sad conclusion is that the majority of the hundreds of pictures Brown painted over the course of a half-century have been lost. There is hope that at least a few will be discovered and restored, as was the happy fate of the Pepperell children.

**WE** CONCLUDE by asking: Does Mather Brown fit into the mold of the five Mather generations before him? It would be unfair to try to squeeze him into such a mold, for he had a different life-style, interests and talents. They were ministers, intellectuals, and authors of many books; he with limited formal education was a painter and illustrator. They were family-men; he remained a bachelor. They were caught up in religious,

political, and educational ferment; he remained aloof from such controversy.

But there were similarities throughout the six generations. All were devoted to the Puritan work ethic. Time to them was a gift from God; it was to be used in His service. Mather Brown, who said he “always worked 12 hours in Winter and 15 hours a day in the Summer,” was a true descendant of John Cotton whose “four-hour glass turned thrice” completed a scholar’s day. Even in old age, Mather Brown could no more cease painting pictures than Cotton Mather could stop writing books!

There was a vast variety of subjects and styles in Brown’s works as there had been in the literary productions of his forebears. There were times when, like his grandfather Byles writing essays, he was “a Mock-Bird,” copying the styles of West and Stuart – though perhaps unintentionally. But his usual aim in portrait-painting was for “a good likeness,” which so pleased the Adams family. His aim, as the young Charles Bulfinch intimated, was not to flatter but to copy a likeness. “Veritas” can well be imprinted on his portraits as upon his ancestors’ books.

Mather Brown’s popularity surged upward during his early and middle years, only to decline in his later years. It was a familiar Mather pattern. Increase and Cotton, as well as Mather Byles, Senior and Junior, had suffered similar fates. They had failed to keep step in the parade of public fashions – or were they marching to the beat of a higher, timeless drum? Whichever it was, they paid a high price in personal tragedy for their devotion to truth and duty, as they understood those spiritual values.

Throughout the two centuries, from the time in 1630 when John Cotton preached the farewell sermon to the Winthrop Fleet, until Mather Brown’s death in 1831, the family documents were, for the most part, in private keeping. Only in more recent years have the extensive diaries and letters been made available for public reading. As a consequence, the Mathers have been *humanized*. The quest of understanding their personalities and motivations now seem more important than retelling the old stories of the Antinomian controversy and the witchcraft delusion. The contributions they made to budding religious, political, and scientific philosophy in Colonial America is well nigh incalculable. Their unbroken line of portraits through the first five generations, climaxed in the sixth by a distinguished artist, is unique in the history of early – or even later – American portraiture.

The rediscovery of the Mathers still goes on!





# NOTES ON SOURCES

## JOHN COTTON

<sup>1</sup> The principal contemporaneous sources of Cotton's life and career, apart from his own writings of more than forty titles, are: John Norton: *Abel Being Dead Yet Liveth*, (a biographical sermon preached shortly after Cotton's death but not printed until 1702 in London;) Samuel Whiting: *Concerning the Life of the Famous Mr. Cotton*, (also written shortly after his death, but printed in Young's *Chronicles of the First Planters*, Boston, 1846;) a biographical sketch in Samuel Clarke's *Collection of Lives of Ten Eminent Divines*, (London, 1662.) Later, with these and other sources, Cotton Mather wrote a brief biography of his grandfather in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (London, 1702; III, 14-32).

<sup>2</sup> William Bradford's mms. "Of Plimoth Plantation" was not printed until 1899 in Boston, under the title: *History of Plymouth Plantation*.

<sup>3</sup> See Charles E. Banks: *The Winthrop Fleet of 1630*, (Boston, 1930) for further information about the vessels, passengers, cargo and voyage.

<sup>4</sup> They may be read in Young's *Chronicles*, 432-47.

<sup>5</sup> H. W. Longfellow: *N.E. Tragedies*, (Boston, 1868) 15.

<sup>6</sup> John Winthrop: *Journal*, Sept. 4, 1633. He kept his diary-journal from 1630 to 1649, binding it in three mms. volumes. The text of the first two was printed in Hartford in 1790. The third was not "discovered" until 1816, in the tower of the Old South Meeting-house, Boston, where the collections of the Rev. Thomas Prince were stored. The complete Winthrop *Journal* was edited by James Savage, and printed under the title, *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649* (2 vols., Boston, 1853.) A later edition, Winthrop's *Journal* was edited by J. K. Hosmer, (2 vols., N.Y., 1908).

<sup>7</sup> M. C. Tyler: *A Hist. of Am. Literature* (N.Y., 1890) I, 215.

<sup>8</sup> T. Carlyle: *Oliver Cromwell's Letters & Speeches*, (N.Y., 1859).

## RICHARD MATHER

The primary source for this chapter is *The Life and Death of that Reverend Man of God, Mr. Richard Mather*, (Cambridge, Mass. 1670.) Although the biographer's name does not appear on the title-page, the signed dedication by Increase Mather states that "it is done by one who hath had the viewing of my Father's Manuscripts -" namely, himself. Cotton Mather in his *Parentator* credits Increase with the authorship. In turn, Cotton rewrote it and included it in his *Magnalia* (III, 122-131.) Little except ornamentation was added to Increase's biography.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Death of . . . R.M.*, 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 44-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Magnalia*, Bk. III, 123.

<sup>4</sup> *Life and Death . . . of R.M.*, 47.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>7</sup> *Magnalia*, Bk. III, 125.

<sup>8</sup> *Journal of R.M.* (mms. in Dorchester Antiq. & Hist. Society).

<sup>9</sup> W. Walker: *Ten N.E. Leaders*, (N.Y., 1901) 116.

<sup>10</sup> M. C. Tyler, *Hist. of Am. Lit.* (N.Y., 1897) 275.

<sup>11</sup> S.E. Morison, *Builders of the Bay Colony*, 197.

<sup>12</sup> So concludes Zoltan Haraszti in *The Enigma of the Bay Psalm Book*, (Chicago, 1956.) He produces convincing evidence that Cotton wrote the Preface.

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller account see G.P. Winship: *The Cambridge Press, 1638-1692*, (Phila., 1945) and John A. Harrer: "Rev. Jose Glover: Beginnings of the Cambridge Press," *Bulletin of Cong'l. Library*, Boston, XII, 1&2. Also Isaiah Thomas: *The History of Printing in America*, (N.Y., 1970 ed.) 42-55.

<sup>14</sup> *New England's First Fruits* (London, 1643).

<sup>15</sup> *Magnalia*, Bk. IV, 126.

<sup>16</sup> S.E. Morison: *Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, 1935) is the principal source of this section.

<sup>17</sup> W. Walker: *Creeds & Platforms of Conglism.* (1960 ed.) 185.

<sup>18</sup> *Life and Death . . . of R.M.*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> First printed in *New Eng. Gen. & Hist. Register*, XX, 248-255.

## INCREASE MATHER

<sup>1</sup> Cotton Mather: *Parentator* 5.

<sup>2</sup> *A.A.S. Proc.* 71, Pt. 2, 271-360. Michael G. Hall, ed. (1961).

<sup>3</sup> *Parentator*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Notes & Queries*, 7th Series, VIII, 326.

<sup>5</sup> J. Norton: *The Orthodox Evangelist*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Mms. *Autobiography*; printed in *Parentator*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>8</sup> *Autobiography*.

<sup>9</sup> *Parentator*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> See J. H. Tuttle: *The Libraries of the Mathers*, (A.A.S. Proc. XX) 269-356.

<sup>11</sup> *Parentator*, 23.

<sup>12</sup> John Josselyn: *Account of Two Voyages to N.E.* (Boston, 1845 ed.) 124-25.

<sup>13</sup> Perry Miller: "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth" *A.A.S. Proc.*, LI, 50.

<sup>14</sup> *An Earnest Exhortation*, (Boston, 1676) 15

<sup>15</sup> See K. B. Murdock: *Increase Mather*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1926) 166-177.

<sup>16</sup> *Autobiography*, following Diary notes.

<sup>17</sup> S.A. Cook: *Encyl. Brit.* (14th ed.) III, 237.

<sup>18</sup> *Magnalia*, Bk. IV, 132. Printed in Latin.

<sup>19</sup> J.G. Palfrey: *Hist. of N.E.*, 83.

<sup>20</sup> *Magnalia*, II, 21.

<sup>21</sup> K.B. Murdock: *Increase Mather*, 343.

<sup>22</sup> Josiah Quincy: *Hist. of Harvard University* (Cambridge, 1840) I, 430. He gives a critical, but generally favorable account of I.M.'s Harvard presidency, as does S. E. Morison in *Harvard College in the 17th Century*, (Cambridge, 1936).

<sup>23</sup> Quincy, *Ibid*, I, 38.

<sup>24</sup> *Parentator*, 209.

<sup>25</sup> Printed in full in C. Robbins: *Hist. of Second Church, Boston*, 212-14.

## COTTON MATHER

Our primary source of knowledge about the thought and character, as well as the day-by-day events of C.M.'s life, is his *Diary*. It was kept from 1681 to 1724, with several extended periods missing. It was not printed until 1911, by the Mass. Hist. Society, (Collections, 7th Series, vols. VII & VIII.) It was reprinted in the "American Classics Series", (N.Y., 1957.) The *Diary* for the Year 1712, long lost, was edited by Worthington C. Ford and published in 1964, (Charlottesville, Va.).

His son, Samuel, wrote *The Life of Cotton Mather*, (Boston, 1729.) He used the *Diary* freely, but with little discrimination. He seemed more interested in the eccentricities than the essentials of his father's life. Dates and other factual matter are reliable.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Samuel Mather, "Passy, 12 May 1784." *Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin* (N.Y., 1888) VII, 484.

<sup>2</sup> H.C. Whitney: *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln* (Boston, 1892) 126.

<sup>3</sup> C. Mather: *Coderius Americanus* (Boston, preached 1708; printed 1774).

<sup>4</sup> S. Mather: *Life . . .*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> I. Mather: *Mms. Diary*.

<sup>6</sup> S. Mather: *Life . . .*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* 26.

<sup>8</sup> C.M. *Diary*, several notations.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 6 Feb. 1682.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 8 Oct. 1681.

<sup>11</sup> S.M. *Life . . .*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 10.



- <sup>13</sup> C.M. *Diary*, 23 Mar. 1717.
- <sup>14</sup> Mms. letter in A.A.S. Library.
- <sup>15</sup> *Andros Tracts*, I, 11-19.
- <sup>16</sup> *The Way to Prosperity* (Boston, 1690) 32.
- <sup>17</sup> *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, III, 9-18.
- <sup>18</sup> W.F. Poole in *Memorial Hist. of Boston* (1882) II, 131-172.
- <sup>19</sup> G.L. Kittredge: *Witchcraft in Old & New Eng.*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1929) 370.
- <sup>20</sup> C.M.: *Memorable Providences* (Boston, 1789) 3.
- <sup>21</sup> T. Hutchinson: *Hist. of . . . Mass. Bay* (London, 1765-68) II, 26.
- <sup>22</sup> J.G. Palfrey: *Hist. of N.E.*, IV, 103.
- <sup>23</sup> C.M.: *Magnalia*, II, 62-63.
- <sup>24</sup> *M.H.S. Coll.*, XXXVIII, 391.
- <sup>25</sup> *Mass. Prov. Records*, 14 Jan. 1696.
- <sup>26</sup> *M.H.S. Coll.*, V, 61-79.
- <sup>27</sup> C.M.: *Some Few Remarks*, 35; R. Calef: *More Wonders . . .*, 38.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter printed in *New Eng. Hist. & Gen. Register*, XXIV, 107-8.
- <sup>29</sup> S. Sewall's *Diary*, I, 366.
- <sup>30</sup> C.M.: *Wonders . . .* (Boston, 1692) p. III.
- <sup>31</sup> See W.F. Poole in *Mem. Hist. of Boston*, II, 166. S.G. Drake's *Witchcraft Delusion in N.E.* (Boston, 1869) lauds Calef (or Calfe) as having "a character beyond reproach" – an estimate the facts do not warrant. If we accept Drake's geneological surmises, Calef was a boy of 14 when the Salem trials were held.
- <sup>32</sup> C.M.: *Some Few Remarks*, 46.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 38-39.
- <sup>34</sup> C.M.: *Diary*, 1 Mar. 1701.
- <sup>35</sup> Mms. letter in M.H.S. Printed in *Pub. of Col. Soc. of Mass.*, XXVI, 301-7.
- <sup>36</sup> C.M.: *Manductio ad Ministerium* (Boston, 1726) 44-46.
- <sup>37</sup> S. Sewall's *Diary*, 20 Oct. 1701.
- <sup>38</sup> The full text of letter to Yale is printed in Quincy's *Hist. of Harvard U.*, I, 524-27.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, I, 527.
- <sup>40</sup> *M.H.S. Proc.*, XLV, 422.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, XLV, 216.
- <sup>42</sup> Z. Boylston: *Hist. Acct . . .* (London, 1726) 1-2.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, Appendix.
- <sup>44</sup> C.M.: *Diary*, II, 635.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, II, 657-8.
- <sup>46</sup> *Writings of O. W. Holmes*, (London, 1891) LX, 358-63.
- <sup>47</sup> *Osler & Other Papers*, (N.Y., 1931) 141-164.
- <sup>48</sup> The 1936 *Year Book* of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, (Introd. XI) hailed C.M. as "the first observer to write about the natural hybridization of plants."

## SAMUEL MATHER

- <sup>1</sup> C. Mather: *Diary*, I, 583.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*: II, 484, 489.
- <sup>3</sup> S.G. Drake: Introd. to I. Mather's *Hist. of King Philip's War* (Albany, 1862) p.XVIII.
- <sup>4</sup> Sibley's *Harvard Graduates*, VII, 219-20.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, VII, 223.
- <sup>6</sup> C. Robbins: *Hist. of Second Church*, 123.
- <sup>7</sup> 2 *Proc. M.H.S.*, IX, 403.
- <sup>8</sup> See art. on "Great Awakening," *Encycl. Brit.*, (14th ed.) X, 672.
- <sup>9</sup> *War is Lawful*, (Boston, 1739) 9.
- <sup>10</sup> See L.S. Mayo's "Memoir of Thomas Hutchinson" in Hutchinson's *History* (Cambridge, 1936 ed.).
- <sup>11</sup> *America Known to the Ancients*, (Boston, 1773) 8.
- <sup>12</sup> *An Attempt to Show . . .*, 28.
- <sup>13</sup> *Works of B. Franklin* (Bigelow ed.) V, 184-5.
- <sup>14</sup> Sparks Mms. (Harvard Coll. Lib.) 16.
- <sup>15</sup> Mms. letter, Dreer Coll., Hist. Soc. of Penna.
- <sup>16</sup> C. Robbins: *Hist. of Second Church*, 129.
- <sup>17</sup> Mms. letter, Prince Coll., B.P.L.
- <sup>18</sup> *Adams Papers* (Cambridge, 1967).
- <sup>19</sup> I *Proc. M.H.S.*, III, 135.
- <sup>20</sup> *New Eng. Hist. Gen. Register*, XXIV, 115-16.
- <sup>21</sup> *Suffolk Probate Recds.*, vol. 84, 235, 37.
- <sup>22</sup> *Boston Magazine*, (1785) II, 237.

## MATHER BYLES, Senior and Junior

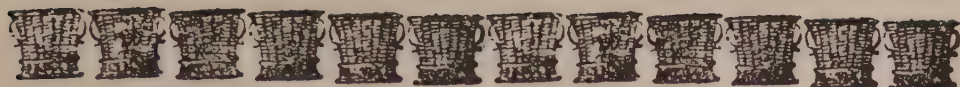
- <sup>1</sup> Sibley's *Harvard Graduates*, VII, 465.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, VII, 468.
- <sup>3</sup> *Poems on Several Occasions* (Boston, 1744) 82.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 53.
- <sup>5</sup> Byles Family Papers, (Gay Transcripts, M.H.S.) I,1.
- <sup>6</sup> Sibley's *Harvard Graduates*, VII, 475.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Character of the Perfect & Upright Man*, (Boston, 1729) 11.
- <sup>8</sup> *Boston News-Letter*, 17 May 1744.
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*about the printing of this book . . .*

The history of printing throughout the American colonial era, (from 1640 to 1789,) can be observed in the preceeding pages. Some advance was made in the design of letters and ornaments, but little in reducing the manual labor of the printer. He had to set each letter by hand, and then imprint the pages, one by one, by turning heavy iron screws set in a wooden frame. Removing the paper from the press, he had to dry the ink over a fire. At long last, the pages would be ready to hand-stitch into a pamphlet or book.

Considerable progress had been made in printing technology by the year 1915, when John W. Lake founded the Casco Printing Company in a small shop in Portland, Maine. The press was electrically driven, but many of the other operations required the manual labor of pioneer days.

The Casco Printing Company has grown from a one-man operation to a family-business of forty employees. Each person, with a distinctive skill and duty, has contributed to the printing of this book.

The type style is known as Baskerville. It was keyboarded onto paper tape, which was transcribed on a Mergenthaler VIP (Variable Input Phototypesetter). The portraits, like the printed pages, were photographed and then negatives were used to make plates for the offset (lithograph) process of printing. The press used was a 25 x 38 Miehle.

Cotton Mather, noting the many *errata* in his London-printed *Magnalia*, quoted from "The Printer's Bible," so named because of the error in Psalm 119:161. "*Printers* have persecuted me." If I may be permitted a further revision of the verse, it would read: "*Printers* have *pleasured* me!"

F.P.C.





*about the Subscribers to this book . . .*

Several of the major Mather works have a list of “Subscribers” printed on the final pages. Long before the rise of commercial publishing, which undertakes the complete venture of choosing and editing a manuscript to the printing, selling, and distributing of it as a book, the colonial author assumed much of that responsibility himself. He placed an order directly with a printer only after he had contacted potential purchasers of the book, lest he be burdened with a printing bill for unsold copies. If author and printer lived in the same neighborhood, they worked closely together in the several steps of designing, editing, proof-reading, printing, and binding the book. The production of this volume has substantially followed the early American pattern.

While the Mathers and other colonial writers received no royalties for their labors, they usually received, *gratis* from their printers, several books which were added to their own and their friends’ libraries. It was not until 1833, that the first free public library was established in the United States – in Peterborough, New Hampshire. Since that late date and modest beginning, thousands of public, school, university, state, and other types of corporate libraries have sprung up across the land. They are now far greater repositories of knowledge and learning than the earlier private libraries had been.

Among the earliest subscribers to this book are the following libraries: American Antiquarian Society, Bangor Public, Boston Athenaeum, Brown University, Bryn Mawr College, Colgate-Rochester Theological, Colgate University, Congregational Library, Connecticut State, Emory University, Harvard College, Grolier Club, University of Illinois, Fort Wayne Public, Louisiana State, Massachusetts Historical Society, National Library Service, Portsmouth Public, Princeton Theological, Rutland Free, Stanford University, Tulane University, United Theological, Virginia State, Wesleyan University, West Hartford Public, Western Theological, Wisconsin Historical Society, Yale Divinity School, and Yale University.

The list is still lengthening at this writing, and will through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Paul E. Merrill include several other public and theological libraries.

Individual and family subscribers are numerous, and they extend across the country from Maine to California, and from Minnesota to Texas.

The writer expresses his thanks and appreciation to every subscriber, and to every reader the hope that this book, (in the words of Increase Mather:) “shall indeed be for God’s Glory, and the good of Posterity.”





*about the author of this book . . .*

Franklin Paul Cole began his study of colonial New England ministers in 1938, and anthologized many of their teachings in *They Preached Liberty* (New York, 1941). This study of the Mather family of ministers, from the “founding fathers” of the 1630s to the Revolutionary era preachers of the 1770s, may be regarded as the fruition of forty years of interest, preaching and writing on the subject. His contribution was acknowledged by a Freedom Foundation award in 1950.

He graduated from DePauw University in 1930, and in the same year married a classmate, Eleanor Snavelly. Together they attended the Boston University School of Theology, and later did post-graduate work at Oxford University. They have two sons, Franklin Randolph and Jonathan Gardner.

The author has been minister of the following churches: First Congregational Church, Chatham, Massachusetts; Williston Church, Portland, Maine; the Church in the Gardens, Forest Hills, New York; and the First Congregational Church, LaGrange, Illinois. While in New York, he was on the panel of radio and television preachers of the National Council of Churches, which regularly broadcast religious services on the three major networks. Returning to Maine in 1963, he served as minister of the First Radio Parish Church of America, of which he is now minister-emeritus.

As a naval chaplain during World War II, he was aboard the USS Missouri on the day of the Japanese surrender. Later he befriended Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa, and they co-authored *The Willow and the Bridge*, (New York, 1947).

Dr. Cole has served on several regional and national boards, which include the Maine Council of Churches, the American Red Cross, the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, the United Fund, and the Chicago City Missionary Society. He served as moderator of the New York State Congregational-Christian Conference in 1947-8. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by DePauw University in 1950 and a Doctor of Sacred Theology degree by Ripon College in 1957.









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